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DAUGHTER OF A STOIC

BY

CORNELIA ATWOOD PRATT

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THE DAUGHTER OF A STOIC

I

WHEN Marion James had drunk from the cup of life her full portion of poverty and illness and anguish of spirit, she died, leaving to the half-brother with whom she had quarrelled on her marriage the doubtfully desirable legacy of her little daughter.

She wrote him on her death-bed a letter which was chiefly remarkable for the things it did not say. He had not heard from her for twelve years.

“Dear Roger,” the letter ran, “I am ill, and the doctors tell me that I shall not recover. Will you look after Arria? She is self-willed; there is no reason to

suppose that she will reward your care with any more consideration than I showed. But if, for the sake of the family, you will see that she gets a modern education which will fit her to earn her own living in a few years, it will be a merciful thing to do, and in time she may even be able to repay you. I am leaving her a little more than enough to clothe her." Here the writing wavered and grew faint. The signature was barely legible.

"I should think Marion would have wished to say more to me after being silent for so many years," complained Major Roger Woolsey.

"Perhaps she did not have the strength," suggested his wife gently. "She was a dying woman. This was her last effort."

The Major stretched out his hands to the fire, and his long upper lip trembled.

His small eyes and purplish face showed a convulsive agitation.

"My only sister, Elizabeth, my only sister," he said in his expansive after-dinner voice.

Mrs. Woolsey came and stood by her husband's chair, dropping a light, caressing hand upon his shoulder. Beside his portly, somewhat shapeless bulk, her slight figure seemed even more delicate and girlish in outline than its wont. With her translucent skin, pink cheeks and early whitened hair she was still very pretty — the figure of a gentlewoman in Dresden ware.

"But she left you the child, Roger."

"Naturally. There was no one else to leave it to."

"We will do our best to give her the sort of training that your sister would have wished."

“She will want the Higher Education — college and all that sort of thing,” said the Major ruefully. The Major was not in sympathy with the ideals of the modern woman, and winced at the thought of having a possible exponent of them in the family.

“Oh!” said his wife dubiously. “But I am sure the way in which I was brought up is the better, the more lady-like, way to educate a girl.”

“It is not so financially advantageous if she is to be a worker. The bloom on the grape has no market value.”

“I do hope,” said Mrs. Woolsey, with an accession of energy, “that Florence will not grow up strong-minded and have erroneous views about things. It would be such grief to me. Perhaps it is just as well that Arria is four or five years younger than Florence. Otherwise

it would seem natural to educate them together. But these new ideas seem to me so mistaken, so subversive of — of everything. I could never consent to train Florence in that way.”

“Certainly not,” said the Major promptly. “I trust Florence will be such another woman as her mother.”

Mrs. Woolsey looked down at the top of her husband’s head — which was bare, polished, and pinkish — with an adoring smile. It was the same smile that had fascinated him when she was twenty, and its potency was still immense.

“Sometimes I feel very sorry,” she said regretfully, “for the women of to-day. They are bartering their birthright for a mess of pottage, and they do not know what they have lost. They seem indifferent to the finer, more imaginative aspects of their position in the world.

Comradeship pleases them as well as courtesy. I hate to think the old ideas are dying out."

The word courtesy reminded the Major tardily that his wife was standing. He rose with a palpable effort, and ponderously wheeled forward another chair to the fire. Then he lifted her fragile blue-veined hand to his yellow-white moustache.

"The old ideas, please God," he said, "will never die out so long as there is left on earth a man's breast fit to harbour them!"

II

At twenty-two Arria James had an interesting face, a level head, and confidence in the universe. Also, and not unjustly, a certain degree of confidence in Arria James.

I say an interesting face, because that was the first impression which it gave you. Only when her features were in repose did you perceive that they were finely cut, and that their harmony produced the satisfying effect men call beauty. For the rest, her eyes were blue, with long black lashes that matched her irrepressibly wavy hair. Her smile, which might almost be catalogued as a feature, broke the tinted roundness of

her cheeks with dimples, yet was not merry. It had both fixidity and subtleness, and came and went with the tide of her thought, quite unrelated to any external excitation to mirth. It had been compared to the smile of the Mona Lisa; one of her professors had also called it Assyrian. However one regarded it, its charm was undeniable.

When she emerged from her college for the last time, her uncle's family still lingered in Washington, where they had spent the spring, and Arria went forthwith to Rosehedges, the family home near Skanseewan, to await their coming. After their arrival there was to be a family council. She was to tell them what she wanted to do with her life, and her future plans were to be discussed.

Fresh from four years of perfectly independent existence, she chafed a little

at the necessity of submitting her projects to any one, but as the obligation was chiefly one of courtesy, it bound her with a double chain. In the meanwhile, she found Rosehedges very delightful.

“Oh no, thank you,” she said to Roderick Kirke when he came over from the next place with his invalid mother’s compliments and request to know if she could do anything to make Miss James’s period of waiting less tedious. “There is nothing. The servants have made me perfectly comfortable, and I have enjoyed these three days immensely. I expect the family to-morrow, and I almost regret it. I have been having such a delicious, solitary time. Of course I am anxious to see them,” she hesitated a second before going on — “especially Florence. It is really six years since I have seen anything of her. She was

abroad so long, you know. I hear she is very brilliant and beautiful."

The young man smiled with a satisfied air which suggested that the words were, in some sort, a tribute to himself.

"She is almost too brilliant to be popular," he observed. "A man said to me once, 'Miss Woolsey is too clever to be real. I always feel as if she were a wonderful talking doll, not flesh and blood at all.'"

Arria opened her eyes rather widely.

"He must have been a stupid man," she said with conviction, "for in the first place there can't be too much cleverness, and in the second, I can't imagine Florence as being anything but graciously human."

Mr. Kirke smiled to himself again.

"Then you like Rosehedges?" he remarked, with a total lack of relevance.

They were on the western verandah, which looked out across the lawn and over the tips of the shrubbery climbing up the bluff, to the broad, shining river, silver in the June sun. The pink mists of morning had hardly faded from the nearer hills across the river. Still beyond and northward, the Catskills were blue in the distance.

“There is so much beauty here that it possesses me entirely. I forget that there are such things as tenement-houses and sweaters’ shops and squalid city streets and maltreated children. It makes vice seem impossible and virtue wholly inadequate,” said Arria slowly, striving to put her impression into words. “It makes life seem more dignified, more of an opportunity, than any other prospect I ever saw. I have not spent a summer here for several years, and I feel as if I

ought to acquire 'manners of the sky' if I am to remain. One of my friends once wrote me from Switzerland that she had seen 'beauty enough to make an angel weep he had to stay in heaven.' This view seems to me like that."

"There are those, you know," suggested Mr. Kirke, with a strictly impersonal manner, "who think it would take more than that to reconcile a mortal to remaining on earth."

Arria hesitated. The one conversational temptation she found it difficult to resist was the taking of a short cut from light to serious talk.

"Pessimism like that is so unintelligent, so stupid," she now said eagerly. "Surely that is not your own view?"

"You know Punch's answer to 'Is life worth living?'" he began languidly.

Miss James nodded. Her red lip

curled scornfully. Was this his idea of intelligent conversation?

“Well, I don’t agree with it. It depends upon the mind. Given a keen intelligence, and everything, even suffering or sorrow, is worth while, because through it all one has the sense of being on the track of hidden things, of coming close to the secrets of creation.”

Arria’s eyes sparkled. She wished she had said that herself.

The man rose. June mornings are warm for abstract conversation, even when one is talking to a very pretty girl.

“By the way, Miss James, I nearly forgot one-half my errand. My mother would be very glad if, since she is unable to come to you, you would come in quite informally some morning to see her. She knew your mother very well,

and is anxious to make the acquaintance of her daughter."

As he took himself off across the lawn, Arria watched him with eyes of approval.

"He has a nice soul!" she said joyously. "And he is going to marry Florence. I'm sure I don't know why, but I never expected to find Florence engaged to a man with a *soul*!"

Such are the limitations of twenty-two years that it did not occur to Arria this was not an adequate characterization of the tall young man with the soft, indifferent voice, keen blue eyes, and interested manner. Where youth can idealize it seldom analyzes, and Roderick's character took on for her that morning a certain luminous indistinctness — which, when you think of it, is the quality a halo has — that it never afterwards lost.

“Well, Roderick,” demanded Mrs. Kirke half an hour later, as her son wheeled her big chair carefully along the terrace, “and what is Marion Woolsey’s little girl like?”

“Nice girl,” said Roderick concisely. “Quite our sort. You’ll like her. Very pretty, with attentive Irish-blue eyes, and an extraordinary smile that comes and goes without, so to speak, paying any attention to the audience. Very keen after ideas. I suspect she has a good many. Not very good, nor very new, probably. Just the same old things, but her personal zest in them would give life to theories exploded before the flood.”

“She’s not at all Florence’s style?”

“My dear mother! Florence and I are withered flowers in comparison. She is young and fresh in spirit. The

innocent blasphemy of her years is attractive. She looks at the world as she might look into a shop window full of spring bonnets. It is all before her where to choose. And her verdict still coincides with the Creator's. It is 'very good.' There is nothing in this life more refreshing to jaded people like ourselves than just her type. She will be none the less delightful from the fact that she will occasionally be ludicrous, as people who are very much in earnest often are. I expect to enjoy her society immensely. Decidedly, she is our sort."

III

ARRIA's ambitions in life were varied. She intended to study for a Ph. D. and become a learned professor; but then she also wanted to see something of a more frivolous society than usually falls in the way of very, very learned ladies, and she was well aware that of these two projects the first was the one which could be deferred with the least danger to its ultimate realization.

Accordingly, after arguing the subject with the Major and Mrs. Woolsey for two hours, she consented to postpone her further studies for a year and remain with them.

The Major called her to his side, and kissed her with much solemnity.

“Your docility gives me much pleasure, my child,” he said.

“Am I docile?” asked Arria, with surprise. “I was afraid I had seemed particularly obstinate.”

“Compared with your mother—” began the Major, then checked himself, and Mrs. Woolsey filled the gap with a gentle murmurous expression of her pleasure in Arria’s acquiescence.

The years of Arria’s school-days had not greatly altered the Major and Mrs. Woolsey. She was, if anything, a trifle more fragile and fairy-like, while he was perceptibly more ponderous; the colour had deepened a shade in his face, the skin had grown flabbier, the cheeks more pendulous.

“But they are quite the same people,” thought Arria, as she went to her room, having said good-night. “Quite the same,”

and she shivered a little. To think that ten whole years of living could pass over one's head, and make so little difference! "Oh I hope," thought the girl, clasping her hands, "that I may be born into some new appreciation of life, at least, every two years. What is the use of it else?"

In her own room she found Florence, in a picturesque dressing-gown, sitting by the eastern window in the faint moonlight, waiting for her.

Arria was conscious of a sensation of pleased surprise. She had felt herself on trial with this new Florence, who at twenty-six was not at all the Florence she had known at twenty, when they last spent a summer together. This was the first token that the probation had ended in approval.

"This is dear of you," said Arria warmly.

"How did the debate end, Arria? Are you going to stay with us?"

The younger girl drew a hassock toward the window and sat down at her cousin's feet, leaning her head against the window frame, her eyes on Florence's face.

"It was not a fair fight. I was on the other side all the while. I want to stay very much, but it seems to me I should be about my business in life."

"Your business in life is to have a good time," said her cousin promptly.

"I admit that," said Arria, with an unexpected intensity. "That is my own theory exactly, but I have some other things to do, too. My mother trusted me to become self-supporting, and repay Uncle Roger for my education, and that is one of the things I must see to, you know."

Florence scrutinized the charming girlish face upturned to hers in the moonlight.

"Do you know that you are very pretty?" she asked, with a certain excitement of manner.

"I am glad you think so," answered Arria. "You will like better having me about. But I am not a circumstance compared to you."

In fact, Florence was attractive, not with an ordered, classical loveliness, but with the beauty belonging to whatever is alert, intense, alive. All eyes were drawn to her in her presence as they are drawn toward leaping flame. A slender figure, a mass of red-brown hair waving away from a white forehead, great red-brown eyes with exquisitely pencilled brows, an almost colourless skin, and fine-cut scarlet lips were some of the physical details of

a personality whose whole effect was delicately dazzling, so vivid was the impression it conveyed of life and interest. The lines of her mouth seemed to say that her interest was dashed now and again by cynicism. She looked, perhaps, not too old, but too experienced for her twenty-six years.

“Oh, I am *passée*,” said Florence carelessly. “What did you mean just now, Arria, about a good time being your theory too?”

Arria hesitated. “It’s rather a long story,” she said slowly. “It involves so much of my life. Are you sure it wouldn’t bore you? I should hate to bore you the first evening you came in to see me like this. You might never come again.”

Florence laughed and settled herself more comfortably to listen. “I never

permit myself to be bored," she said, "and you have been uncommonly entertaining up to this time. As they say of novels, the interest is well sustained. Now go on."

"I prefer to tell you. It is a question of one of my working principles, and if it should ever lead me, as it might, to do strange or selfish things, I would rather you knew beforehand why I did them. You would be less shocked. Do you know very much about my mother?"

Florence shook her head.

"She was a saint and a martyr. You know she had only a very little money of her own, about the five hundred a year that I have now. The fortune came from Uncle Roger's mother and reverted to him when our grandfather died. And mamma quarrelled with Uncle Roger when she married — I believe he did not

approve of my father and wanted her to marry some one else — and so, though he tried to give her an income, she would not have it, but went off and never wrote to him. And she and my father were wretchedly poor. Papa was ill almost always, and he ought to have gone South, and there was no money to send him, and I was a cross baby and kept him awake at night, and they got into debt, and — oh, everything! They had almost all the miseries that people can have. But my mother always said that it was no matter — that she did not mind. What she meant was that she loved my father so much that nothing hurt — not illness, nor poverty, nor cross babies, nor even seeing him suffer, so long as he was alive and they were together. And she has told me he felt in the same way. But I hardly believe that. I have noticed

that men always think things hurt, even very little things. I don't think they can bear as much as we can.

“She began to train me to bear things very early. She was afraid for me, afraid that I might not be strong and brave enough to live my life. Since I have grown older, I have learned to measure her own suffering by the fear she felt for me. I never saw her cry but once. It was just before my father died, and I was seven years old, but I remember perfectly how she sat with me in her arms beside his bed talking about my future. ‘You are going, and I shall go too,’ I heard her say. ‘She must stand on her own feet. And who knows what unkind things the years will do to her? She must be strong. I must make her strong. O my baby, my baby!’ and then she broke down, and I slipped

away from her and crept miserably off into a corner, trying to think what it could mean.

“So my training began early. If precepts could make a philosopher, I should have been a Stoic from my cradle. She had named me for the Roman Arria, and as soon as I was old enough — not to understand, but to be impressed — she told me the story —”

“What is it? I have forgotten,” her cousin interrupted.

“Oh, don’t you know? She was the wife of a noble, who, being condemned to death, had the right of his class to execute the sentence with his own hand. But he had not the courage until, visiting him in his cell one day, his wife plunged a dagger into her own heart, and drawing it out handed it to him with a smile, saying only, ‘It does not hurt.’

"My mother tried to teach me to say that of all my woes. When I grew a little older, she taught me Marcus Aurelius. I have a writing-case she gave me the year before she died, with the sentences she quoted oftenest and was fondest of written upon the back of the blotter leaf. See here," and rising, Arria made a light and took a quaintly embroidered little case from her table. Florence bent over it eagerly. In a bold, clear hand, blurred here and there as though at some time tears had been shed upon it, were written the cheerless precepts the mother had chosen for her child.

"Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature!"

"Nothing happens to a man which he is not fitted by nature to bear."

"It is a shame for the soul to be first

to give way in this life when the body does not give way."

"Unhappy am I because this has happened to me? Not so, but happy am I, though this has happened to me . . . neither crushed by the present nor fearing the future."

"Let it make no difference to thee whether thou art cold or warm if thou art doing thy duty; and whether thou art drowsy or satisfied with sleep; and whether ill-spoken of or praised; and whether dying or doing something else. For it is one of the acts of life, this act by which we die; it is sufficient then in this act also to do well what we have in hand."

Arria took the little case and replaced it, turned out the glaring gas-jet, and came to sit down again at her cousin's feet.

"She died that way — as she had tried

to live. But, child as I was, I was not deceived. Her stoicism was unreal. It was only a form of endurance, something that helped her to be silent. Even I could see that after my father's death life was a long agony to her, and not even the thought of leaving me could make the end unwelcome.

"Of course I revolted from her teaching. It seemed to me very early that the way to be comfortable was not to say of bruises that they did not hurt, but to get no bruises. I thought I knew what I wanted then. I am sure I do now. I mean to be comfortable. I intend to enjoy. I will not be poor and miserable. I am not going to let life hurt me as it hurt her. In short," said Arria, with a sudden change to a lighter manner, "I propose to have a good time. Of course, I hope my ideas of what

makes a good time are not cheap nor common."

Florence smiled down at her with an expression Arria did not comprehend.

"How young you are!" she sighed half regretfully. "How do you suppose you are going to escape the common lot? What would you do if love called you where unhappiness was?"

"I should not go. I don't know anything about love. But I do not imagine it can be as—as strong as I am," said the girl fearlessly, although there was something in the strenuousness of the other's tone which filled her with a vague discomfort. The accent of the great passions was as unfamiliar to Arria's ear as their grip to her heart, but the proximity of a commanding emotion is quick to make itself felt.

Miss Woolsey clasped her small hands

meditatively about her knees and then unclasped them.

"To say 'college' is evidently quite the same thing as saying 'cloister,'" she observed. "The one obviously affords no more advantages than the other for seeing the world. Seeing the world, my dear,—for a woman,—means making the acquaintance of Man."

Arria was silent an instant. She was quite sure Florence was brilliant, but for the moment she doubted her good taste.

"I find a great many other things worth studying," she declared with seriousness.

"You are delightful," averred Miss Woolsey. "It must be that you are a type. How wide-awake you are mentally, and how totally undeveloped emotionally! The creed you declare is a

man's creed, not a woman's. No woman was ever consistently selfish enough to live up to it. Wait until you begin to feel things. You probably regard feelings now as pretty toys, inferior to ideas, but still interesting. You have no conception of what it is to feel."

"I don't know what you mean," said Arria coldly, her suspicions of bad taste confirmed. "I feel things now."

Her cousin laughed.

"Feeling, my dear,—again for a woman,—means only one thing. I refer to the emotional capabilities whose activity makes us the wives and mothers of the race. Don't begin to feel before you must. You are as refreshing as a glass of spring-water now."

Arria rose and leaned against the window-frame, looking down at her cousin.

“Is feeling the miracle that changes the water into wine?” she asked gravely.

Florence sprang up and kissed her with a laugh. “That is exactly it! Good-night.”

“Florence! You think my creed is impracticable for a woman. What is yours?”

Miss Woolsey, trailing the silk and lace of her *negligée* across the room, hesitated. She often received confidences, yet seldom gave. But just now she was stirred by their talk, which had interested her, and she yielded to the wish to answer.

“I don’t know why I should not tell you,” she answered. “I am proud of it. But, like yours, it requires a little preamble. I began life with a considerable stock of credulities, for mamma had tried to make me into something like

herself. I adore my mother. I could worship the ground she walks on. She is everything that is sweet and simple and good and charming. But you simply cannot make a gentlewoman of the last generation out of a nowadays girl. There is something in the air that prevents it. I console myself for the loss of my illusions by protecting hers. By the way, I don't want her to hear your creed. I suppose I have grown a trifle cynical. When you have been with us a year, and lived my life, you will understand some of the reasons.

“It happened after I had experimented with most things and was tired of them, that I came to know well a high-souled Pagan gentleman who—who satisfied me. Because he was tolerant toward all the failings of humanity, alike to those he did and did not share, men called him a

child of this world, and because he was also fine and loyal, and loved life bravely without succumbing to it, women esteemed him as only a little lower than the angels. And I was one of the women who thought him so. I don't know why it seemed to him that my presence in his life would make it richer, but I thank the gods hourly that he did think so. ✕

“And so to my disbeliefs in all the things earth has to offer, I added a belief in one — the one whose strength you doubt.”

IV

“WE are always very quiet in summer,” said Mrs. Woolsey. “This has never been a gay neighbourhood, still we have some very pleasant people hereabouts whom I want you to know as soon as possible. It is too warm for a large dinner, but the moonlight on the terrace is so divine this week that I think I must ask Roderick and Mr. Sefton and perhaps the Lawrences to dine informally with us some evening soon.”

“Who are the Lawrences?” asked Arria.

“Brother and sister. A perfectly harmless pair. Athletics and piety,” defined Florence briefly.

“And Mr. Sefton?”

“A self-made man. He is just what a new man ought to be, fresh, direct, and powerful. If I were creating men, they should be like that, for the world’s sake. Personally I prefer the more effete specimens. They are more amusing if less reliable. But Mr. Sefton is sometimes amusing too. His seriousness edifies me as much as most men’s levity. He is like you, willing to talk about the Causes of Things between the acts of a farce-comedy. He is absurdly rich, so rich that if we did not like him, we should say it was vulgar to have so much money. As it is, we offer him suggestions about spending it. He bought the Ostrander manor after Petrus Ostrander and his wife were divorced, and built a new house there, and has bored himself by trying to live

in it since. It is rather tiresome to be a virtuous multimillionaire."

"I don't know much about multimillionaires."

"They are a good deal alike. There are only a few things that are expensive enough for them to do. Almost all of them want a big house. After that they may have a fad for yachts, or horses, or collecting things, or all three. Occasionally they go in for philanthropy, more rarely for dissipation. It isn't often that the man who has the self-restraint necessary to accumulate millions has also the abandon needful for squandering them. Mr. Sefton is working out his æsthetic salvation just now. He collects pictures, and very good ones. His gallery is much too fine to be buried in a country neighbourhood. He has excellent specimens of

some of the great names. One of his two Corots is the most enchanting I have ever seen. It is small, but so beautiful!"

Arria listened with parted lips.

"Fancy owning a Corot!" she said. "Money is exquisite. One can do such wonderful things with it that I think only the good and the noble and the fine ought to be allowed to have much."

"Providence doesn't agree with you, my dear," returned Florence. "He frequently shows what he thinks of it by giving it to quite another class. But Mr. Sefton is really fine, especially if you care for tremendous things like Niagara Falls, or Walt Whitman's poetry, or the canyons of the Colorado. Mamma has taken him up because he gives her the sensation of energy. It is a nice sensation — when you can take it vicariously."

“Florence is talking nonsense, dear, as she often does,” said Mrs. Woolsey. “There has to be new blood in society occasionally. And it is lonely in the country if one does not like one’s neighbours. Mr. Sefton may be a little heavy at times, but he is a man whom I thoroughly respect. I shall invite them for Thursday.”

On Thursday evening accordingly Arria found herself placed at dinner beside a personage whom she had previously inspected in the drawing-room with the frankest interest.

Mr. Sefton was a powerfully built man of middle size and middle age. He was an inconspicuous person, but when your eye fell upon him you perceived that his very quietude, like the immobility of Barye’s bronzes, conveyed an intimation of elemental force. His hair was iron-

gray. His keen eyes were gray too. The lines of his mouth were so firm it seemed impossible that they could be moulded of such facile stuff as flesh and blood.

Arria glanced at the other men in critical comparison. It had long seemed to her that Major Woolsey was too palpably a creature of flesh and blood. The thought was disloyal, but there were certainly hours when he looked distinctly earthy. The hour of dining was one of these. She turned toward Kirke with a breath of relief. There are people who so answer to our vague unformulated demands that before we know we have a certain ideal we find that they fulfil it. Looking at Roderick Kirke, it seemed to Arria that he looked as a man should.

“To continue what we were saying,

Miss James," began Mr. Sefton, putting down his soup spoon. Arria started and dimpled attentively. She had just been observing to herself that such a totally unconscious air of distinction as Roderick possessed was not so frequently the result of inherited good-breeding and position as of a good figure and a philosophical cast of thought.

Mr. Sefton was fond of conversation. He talked with the unconscious energy and directness of a man who has ideas of which he wishes to rid himself.

"I think you are mistaken," he was remarking, "in saying that bad taste is the natural birthright of man. I believe that most of us know and love a good thing when we see it. But we see good things so seldom that we do not know that we love them. There must be a kind of

acquired familiarity with them first. The child loves its parents naturally, but it is years before it knows that it loves, and years more before it knows what love is. I admit the process is a long one. I should like to convince the good people down yonder in the town that they love beauty. I open my picture-gallery to them two days in a week. It is the most convincing argument I have at hand. What is the result? A travelling circus comes to town on one of my afternoons. There are three thousand people at the circus and not one in my gallery. It will be a long day—more than my life-time, perhaps—before ten per cent of those people will prefer the pictures. But the time will come. And meantime the gallery stays open.”

Arria brightened as she listened. Here was another man with a soul. At this

rate Rosehedges would soon become Paradise!

“But that gives them only one form of beauty,” she suggested.

“Two. Colour and line. But more than that, it teaches them to see. What we acquire from the great artists is more than a momentary sensation of pleasure in being shown a given scene from their point of view. We learn from them their way of looking at things. I remember that after I first saw a collection of Rousseaus, for weeks I saw Rousseaus in nature everywhere. I had never noticed them before. Now I can never overlook them.”

“A great man might be defined as one who can make clear his point of view,” said Arria. “But,” timidly, “the — the people who do not come to the gallery, you know, the ones who are more amused by the circus. Do you suppose it would

be a real amelioration of life to them if they did come?"

Mr. Sefton's brows met over his keen eyes. She had touched a tender point.

"Yes," he said rather too earnestly. "Why, Miss James,"—his closed hand touched the table lightly,—“I believe it is the best amelioration of life, possibly the only real one. Our favourite American panacea is education of the mind. Look here, does such education make people happier? I don't believe it does. In so far as it enables a man to improve his material condition it is a benefit doubtless. But after that what does it do? It makes for restlessness, for discontent. Even in its highest phases how does it work? I hear you are a graduate of a young ladies' college. You ought to be able to tell me."

"One of our professors said she was

going to write a tract for the girls entitled 'How to be Happy, though Educated,'” said Arria.

“Exactly! Either the education of our young people is so superficial that it does not educate, or else so thorough that it brings them under the torturing lash of an intellect too completely awakened. Did you ever notice that while we are all after new ideas, they never satisfy when found? We are impelled to push on to find others, to be as little satisfied by them in turn. I tell you the solution of the problem of happiness is not more knowledge, but more loveliness. The answer to hideousness is beauty. It is the only thing that fills, that rests, that satisfies. Knowledge cannot, for knowledge is only relative. Beauty is absolute. What makes the charm of Europe for us restless Americans but the fact that those

older civilizations have learned this and embodied it in the monuments they left to their descendants? Coming to a new country, we were cheated of our proper heritage of beauty, especially in the architectural line. We had no legacy from the past to educate us unconsciously as we walked our streets. The duty of the present," said Mr. Sefton, checking himself as if just aware that he had been riding his hobby violently, "is to create such legacies for the future. That, I take it, is the ultimate use of a rich man in our country—if there is any use for him."

"Sefton is in clover," said Roderick Kirke to his *fiancée*, under his breath. "Your cousin is listening to him with her soul in her eyes. It is a long day since he has expounded his art ideas to such an auditor."

"Yes, they are nice eyes," said Florence.

"But Arria always listens as if she had never heard human speech before. It's a flattering habit she has."

"Once there was country life in America, North as well as South," the Major was saying explosively at his end of the table. "My father and grandfather were content to live right here. Rosehedges was good enough for them. Why not for me? Why is it supposed that I ought to have another house in the city and rent a cottage at the shore, and go here in summer and go there in winter? It is all demoralizing nonsense, sir, all nonsense."

"It is the advancement of the women, papa," suggested his daughter promptly. "That is what does all the mischief, you know. Rosehedges is good enough for you, but not for mamma and me. So we travel to find a place that is."

“I have sometimes thought that was the cause of the international marriage,” said Miss Lawrence, a languid little woman with a sweet voice, “that effort of the American girl to find a place good enough for her. I wish some one would collect statistics about the comparative comfort of the frying-pan and the fire. There is Lady Bertie Brett, you know, whose marriage is always cited as such a conspicuous example of the thoroughly successful English-American match. Even her path has had—perhaps not thorns, but certainly little briars in it. The last time I was in London I saw at the New Gallery such an excellent picture of her, a high-bred, spirited, beautiful head. I admired it very much, but while I still lingered before it a very fat old lady with an air of consequence came rolling by. She

fumbled at her lorgnette first, then fumbled at her catalogue. 'Oh!' I heard her remark to her companion, 'Lady Bertie Brett! I thought it was some one, but I see it isn't!'"

"What a pity she could not have heard that remark herself!" said Florence. "Even as a girl her glance had a certain disintegrating quality. I have seen very composed people go to pieces before it. It might have disconcerted even a British matron."

"Oh no!" murmured Roderick languidly. "It is some time since you have been in London. You forget."

"What I have heard about Lady Bertie Brett," struck in Mr. Lawrence, "was that she is good-hearted. McIlvaine tells a story about why the Bretts changed their hotel when they were in St. Augustine shortly after their marriage.

Lady Bertie had a dressmaker of genius and good looks, who did some work on her trousseau, and shortly after was married herself to a Californian of some wealth and consequence, and she and her husband turned up on the wedding tour at the same hotel where the Bretts were stopping. Lady Bertie said the frocks she wanted to wear just then were precisely the ones which that dressmaker had done for her, but she couldn't help feeling it would be bad taste and inconsiderate on her part to flaunt them before the happy bride. So she and Lord Bertie just quietly went away to another hotel for the rest of their stay. That, now, is what I call consideration!"

At the end of the dinner coffee was served on the terrace. The men did not linger long in the dining-room. When Roderick came out, he discovered Arria

a little apart from the rest. She was bending over a rose-tree white with blossoms, and it seemed in the moonlight that her lips moved. She straightened herself at his approach, and lifted to him a brilliant, excited face. They had become friends and allies already. He found a certain champagne-like zest, which was almost intoxicating, in the froth and bubble of her young ideas. As for Arria, although she felt a certain lofty disapproval of a young man who apparently treated his profession — for Roderick had a law office in Skanseewan — as a pastime, and his pastimes as professions, she had nevertheless discovered and come to rely upon that fund of ready sympathy, that generous appreciation of every one's point of view, which was at once Roderick Kirke's weakness and his strength.

“I have had such a good time!” she said. “Do you know, I believe I was very near a prayer just now. Why should it be incongruous to return thanks for a dinner-party? I was very much interested and amused, and then to come out into this heavenly night and smell the roses! It is more than I can bear. It turns my head.”

“What would the prayer have been if you had reached it?” asked Roderick appreciatively, though smothering a smile.

“I think,” said the girl reflectively, “that I was on the point of saying, ‘Help me to do justice to life.’ It is so beautiful — so beautiful!”

V

“MR. SEFTON, for you, miss,” said Mary, the maid, to Arria.

The girl started up impatiently. It was an afternoon in late July, and she was sitting under the big elms eastward of the house with Florence and Roderick Kirke, and enjoying herself extremely, for Florence had been ridding her mind of a large number of perfectly irresponsible ideas about life, death, and marriage. In the six summer weeks Arria had been at Rosehedges Mr. Sefton's calls had certainly been as frequent as Roderick's own, but never before had he asked for her and her only. She thought it tiresome as well as unusual that he had

done so now, and planned as she went, to bring him out of doors where that fascinating pair were lounging under the elms.

Sefton was leaning on the mantel in the shaded drawing-room, pulling at his gloves. He came forward quickly as she appeared at the door, a slender white figure invading the green gloom. Her dress was covered with a hundred curly little ruffles, edged with lace, and they moved ceaselessly with her movements, as the rising and falling spray drifts about a rock. She had never looked more remote, more unapproachable, nor—in his eyes—more beautiful, and his heart sank.

He took her offered hand in an impetuous, close clasp, and quite forgot to drop it. She felt that his own hand trembled, and looked up quickly to as-

certain the meaning of such a phenomenon. His eyes met hers and held them in a gaze she could not fathom. He spoke without preamble.

"I am afraid," he said deliberately, "I am afraid that I love you."

"Why afraid?" she said hastily, and immediately recognized that she could not have made a more foolish speech.

"Because it seems most unlikely that you can care for me," he answered quietly, "and yet—I shall be miserable if you cannot."

"I like you very much," she protested, then perceived hopelessly that this also was a futile observation. She withdrew her hand irresolutely, wondering why he seemed to expect to keep it.

"Could you possibly imagine intrusting your life to my keeping?" he begged.

His questions were singularly difficult

to answer in an unfavourable way. One can imagine so many things!

"You know I think you trustworthy. You are a man on whom one relies. . . I suppose that is not exactly what you want."

"I am glad," he answered, in a voice that moved her in spite of herself, "to seem anything that is good in your eyes. But even if you would, I should be sorry to have you give your life into my hands—as some women might—because I could care for it fittingly."

"That is not it at all," she cried with a sudden anger that restored her self-possession, stepping back and seating herself as she spoke. "Money of course is—I do not know what it is, except that we all want it. But it is yourself that gives one confidence," she said, with head erect and eyes alight disdainfully.

“Arria,” he urged eagerly, “I know that I am a great deal older than you, and that there is no reason in myself why you should care for me. You know my life, but you cannot possibly imagine how barren, how futile, how devoid of everything that should make life worth living, it has seemed to me since I met you. When I went to my own house that first night, it turned my heart sick as I drove through the gates and saw it looming in front of me, big, empty, dead. And I said to myself, ‘It is a beautiful place; it represents a part of my life’s work, but it is just so much stone and wood and mortar wasted. It is not a *home*.’ And I knew almost at once what it needed to make it alive and beautiful. I want to make you see it as I do. Do you understand, Arria — dearest — sweetest? I love you

—and I want you to help me make a home.”

The girl looked up at his face, his strong, furrowed face, working with an emotion which she found incomprehensible.

“I do not love any one,” she said regretfully.

That touching confidence of man in feminine docility which has been responsible for many an inapt marriage sprang up in his heart. Could he not teach her to love him then?

“You will care for some one, some time. Why should it not be I, and now?” he urged.

She hesitated.

“I don’t know what to think, what to believe,” she said slowly. “I feel like a blind person groping.”

He held his breath and waited. She went on slowly and painfully.

“Don’t you see how hard it is? One doesn’t believe the novels, and I never knew any one intimately but Florence who—oh well! I don’t think I could make you understand. It is only that I lack convictions about the frame of mind in which one should marry. There isn’t—I am afraid you will laugh at this—but there isn’t any reliable body of doctrine on the subject! I like you. I like you very much. I would sooner confide my life to you than to any one I ever knew. Its seems a reasonable idea. One trusts you so. But I suppose that is not exactly what you want.”

“I am going to take what I can get,” said Sefton, a little hoarsely, “and ask the Lord for more. I know the romances are against me; but Arria, life is on my side. I dare swear that if you trust me with yourself you will not regret it.

You will be happy. I know you will.
And I — ”

There was a sudden flush about his eyes ; something very like a tear made its way tortuously down his cheek. Arria watched it, wondering.

“ You will trust me, then ? ” he said tensely. “ You will let me try to teach you to love me a little. I am sure — *sure* — that you can learn.”

He loomed at her side, large and insistent. She felt herself stirred by his strenuousness, his obvious devotion, and driven by the silent impelling of his will.

“ I — I will try,” she faltered. He bent above her as if he would have taken her in his arms, but her calm eyes unconsciously repulsed him, and with a breath that was half a sigh, he laid his lips to her forehead.

When he was gone she felt a sense of

vague relief. The proximity of a strong feeling which she did not understand had disturbed her.

But she quite understood the serene elation she began to feel. It was because life was very simple, very easy, in spite of all she herself had said to the contrary. You had only to choose your line, to say 'I will that my existence be thus and so,' and forthwith—supposing you a person of character—opportunities arose and events grouped themselves smilingly on either hand to mark your progress down the years. And they were the very events you would have chosen if you had condescended to choose!

She had meant to put poverty and misery out of her life, and now even the remote possibility of them had vanished like a mist before the sun, in the flood of affluence and affection that rolled across

her path. Life looked sunny and intelligible to her, and she was sure that she had done the right and appointed thing, as she went slowly out to join the two beneath the trees, who had meanwhile been indulging in sundry speculations.

“Do you suppose your cousin knows what is happening?” asked Roderick, looking after her as she crossed the grass toward the house. There was the suspicion of an irritable inflexion in his voice. He, as well as Arria, had been enjoying the afternoon.

“It is impossible to say. My own theory is that she does not know. There is so much of life and experience that does not come within Arria’s range of vision. She knows some extraordinary things, but it is almost always safe to assume that she is ignorant of the obvious.”

“Do you think she will marry him?”

“My dear Roderick! Why don’t you ask me to calculate the next eclipse of the moon off-hand, or some easy little thing like that? Girls have married middle-aged millionaires before now. It is not unusual.”

“That seems to me one reason the more why your cousin should not do it. She is not fond of the usual,” urged Roderick.

“She likes security. There is something very safe and restful about the idea of marrying Mr. Sefton. He is a favourable specimen of his class.”

“He is a thoroughly good fellow,” admitted Roderick. “And I fancy he is hard hit.”

“He told me — but that was when they first met — that he admired her because she knew how to think. He has not yet learned what a dubious merit that is in a

wife. Suppose she does not think as her husband does! Mr. Sefton and Arria would be a thousand times more likely to differ about everything in the world than you and I, for instance."

"Ah! That is another matter," said Roderick. "Do you know, we are such good comrades that it is often a pleasant surprise to me when I remember that we are also engaged."

Florence was silent, but the slow colour climbed her cheeks. She lifted her eyes to Roderick's face with a look that was an entreaty, but he was cheerfully unconscious that he had said an atrocious thing.

Their world often said how well Florence and Roderick were suited to one another. It had never yet had occasion to remark upon their mutual infatuation. She believed in their suitability thor-

oughly. But she knew in the depths of a soul rebellious at the knowledge that it was her wit, her philosophy, her cynicism even, which suited him—not her heart. At the beginning of their engagement she had sometimes resented intensely the gentle, pleased manner in which he regarded the situation, but she had been wise enough to coin her own less placid satisfaction into epigrams, a proceeding which delighted Roderick as her ardour never could have done.

“Mr. Sefton will take Arria into his gallery some day and say, ‘All this shall be yours, if you will suffer me to fall down and worship you,’” she now remarked irrelevantly. “It will be a very tempting situation for a girl of her tastes.”

“I suppose it is all right,” said Roderick discontentedly, “but he is too old,

or, rather, she is too preposterously young. Her mind may be mature, but the rest of her nature is in pinafores, and I don't believe Sefton is the man to develop it. It isn't the ideal marriage for her."

"Ideal things are not meant to be done. They are only to look at, like the red-cheeked candy apples we used to have when we were children. I never did succeed in understanding why such beautiful fruit was not to be eaten."

"Your cousin does not regard ideals in that light. She asks for the absolute as serenely as if the relative did not exist. The audacity of her demand on life is so splendid that it entitles her to get what she wants. The on-looker feels as if he wanted to help her to it."

"That is probably what Mr. Sefton feels," said Florence, a little wearily, "and what he thinks he is doing. And

as the world goes, ten or fifteen millions are the Absolute. What more does a young woman of this generation want? "

VI

BECAUSE he had obtained his heart's desire against his own belief, Sefton rejoiced unspeakably, but still doubting. Happiness is a malady for which the strong are not prepared.

He had always known that he should be rich some day. It had been a conviction, rather than a dream or a hope, of his meagre boyhood in a Maine village. When he went West in his young manhood, he found that for the wise and prudent there was abundant opportunity for realizing such prevision. A young surveyor, he had gotten hold of some timber lands first, which had proved very profitable, and afterwards had invested

in real estate on the edge of some growing towns destined to become cities. His success had been rapid and monotonous. It had also been unsatisfactory, though what it was that he wanted, he did not know. Books did not tell him, nor the crude, glittering prosperity of the oxygenated life around him.

When first he went to Europe, the older and mellower civilizations whispered to him the unthought-of tidings that the word of salvation was beauty, and he hailed the revelation.

Returning, he left the West and came to Skanseewan. He had always desired a country life, and here beside the gray, old river-town he resolved to build himself an abiding-place for his later years, which should be a propaganda of his new doctrine that those who ran might read. His head was also full of ideas,

so quixotic that he did not talk of them, for the better instruction of the people of the town in the art of discerning the admirable.

It was only on meeting Arria James that he felt with a force which shook his sturdy soul that for him also life had another word. What, after all, was beauty but Love's handmaid?

Incidentally, also, it was a pleasure to the man whose busy, lonely life had given small opportunity for the social intercourse in which he really delighted, to be welded into the group of families of whom the Woolseys and Kirkes were chief. Most of his neighbours had been cordial, but these had been kin as well as kind. They were people to whom he could talk. Inherited wealth without intelligence bewildered this man's untutored sense of the fitness of things.

Arria's engagement had been received faultlessly by the family. All dilated upon Sefton's character, and his millions were allowed to sink into a glimmering golden background, appreciated but unmentioned.

The Major gave her his blessing with much solemnity, and then fell into reminiscent anecdotes of the love affairs of forty years ago, which were slightly inapropos, inasmuch as it would seem young women then were more impetuous and emotional, and irreproachable matches which parents and guardians could bless were less frequent than to-day.

"My dear," said Mrs. Woolsey, kissing her, "I am so glad you are going to marry a *good* man. I pray you may have as happy a life as my own has been, and I can't tell you how I rejoice that you are to be near us always."

Florence said little. She was suffi-

ciently a daughter of to-day to appreciate the advantages of such a marriage, but in her secret soul she was sorry for Arria. There was something more dazzling than wealth, and her cousin had not found it. She lifted her small head proudly and had difficulty in keeping a patronizing accent out of her congratulations.

Arria had never seen the house which was to be her home save as she had glimpsed it one day when they had visited the pictures. She had expressed a desire to do so. Accordingly Mr. Sefton diffidently proffered his hospitality for an afternoon to the ladies of Rosehedges.

The site of the place was even more attractive than that of the Woolseys' home, for, standing on higher ground, it commanded the faint blue hills in the south as well as the river and the mountains to northward.

The house itself, of gray uncut stone, was Elizabethan in style. There is no more piquant or interesting façade, and already the creepers had begun to thicken on the walls, obliterating the look which stamped it as of yesterday.

It was frankly English in design, inside and out. Sefton averred that no other nation on the face of the earth has so thoroughly mastered the science of comfortable living.

The master of the house received his guests with nervous cordiality. He had much to tell of the building of the structure, as they passed from room to room. He had meant to keep it simple, even mediæval in its simplicity. Most modern houses were too elaborate, too rococo for his taste. Did they care for carving? There was a great deal of it — it was one of his hobbies. He had spent six

months in England with his architect,—who was out of health and required a vacation,—wandering from place to place, choosing and sketching designs for it. Those were months! Cathedral, college, church, and hall had been laid under contribution for the work. Did they notice the springing of that fan-tracery in the ceiling of the dining-room oriel? It was the grim, grotesque head which occupies the same position in the great dining-hall of Christ's at Oxford. And that head, half devil and half lion, repeated in the frieze, that was a bit from Magdalen. For simplicity and strength surely the carving of the best English period was unequalled. He looked anxiously at Arria. Perhaps she preferred designs in the Italian manner? It would be most unfortunate, for hall, music-room, and dining-room were panelled, ceiled, and carved in quite an-

other taste. The drawing-room alone was less massive and suggested France.

But Arria, it transpired, had fond memories of playing in her childhood with the ponderous and priceless tomes of Pugin's Gothic Architecture, and she adored grotesques. He breathed more freely.

"What a delight," he said, in a low voice, "you will find in travel. There are so many things I want to show you! There is an old church porch I know in France that you will like. A group of saints and martyrs on the pillars are lifting insipid, holy faces, while beneath the feet of each one crouches a cowering devil, obviously overcome and defeated. They have beaten down Satan under their feet, and they are distinctly less interesting from the fact that he looks as if he could never rise again. Unconsciously the carver demonstrated that

life is struggle," and, without knowing it, the self-made man squared his shoulders.

The housekeeper was summoned to escort them through the upper apartments. At one of the smaller bed-chambers Florence paused to rhapsodize. The room was finished in mahogany and done in the dullest, softest blues, so toned that the border-pieces of old tapestry which were used for a dado above a low wainscoting of the rich wood were not thrown out of value by any cruder colouring. The dressing-room was a mere recess in which a length of the same soft-toned tapestry, swinging aside, revealed an antique ewer and bowl of silver over whose curves Miss Woolsey became enthusiastic.

"Those aren't to be picked up every day! I never saw but one at all like it. It is scandalous that a mere man should

have such good taste. Arria, how are you going to live up to it?"

The girl, who was leaning against the door-way with a wearied air, looked up indifferently.

"Yes," she said, almost resentfully, "it is very charming. But they are only *things*, after all. I have often wondered why so clever a person as the devil used the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof for a temptation. It is never the material things that tempt persons of taste."

"Oh, isn't it?" said her cousin.

Going down, they found that Roderick and the Major awaited them, and that tea had been served upon the lawn in English fashion. The service was of old silver also, and a delight to the eye, while all the other appointments were equally flawless.

Roderick came presently to Florence's

side, where she sat in shaded comfort, trifling with her tea.

“Well,” he said, “and what of Sef-ton’s *bibelots*? Don’t they make you envious of the little cousin? We shan’t have any such, you know.”

“They are extraordinary, certainly. I never saw such an original collection of bric-a-brac. It is distinguished, different. Some of his embroideries are marvellous, and the way he has used them better yet. I don’t see how he came to have such good taste. But as for envying any one, Arria was just remarking superbly that such like articles were, after all, of the earth, and were not temptations to persons of discrimination. I am a person of discrimination, and”—her eyes challenged his—“the only mortal I can imagine envying would be a woman who could interest you more than I.”

"It is impossible," said Roderick, politely, "that any one could be more interesting."

Florence rose abruptly.

"Look at Arria," she said. His glance followed hers where the girl stood for the moment apart. As they looked, her gaze turned from the far, faint hills in the north to the generous and gracious structure behind them, then to the man whose thought it was. Her expression was critical, detached, dispassionate.

"There is a glittering chill about her sometimes that makes me shiver. It reminds me of what we read of polar springs. They say the flowers the sun wrests from the ice-cap are very beautiful, but one must go a-maying in furs. She is weighing us all in the balance now, particularly Mr. Sefton, and we shall all be found wanting unless we

immediately make ourselves charming. Come, let us talk to her."

Roderick found himself suddenly irritated, without knowing why.

"No," he said peremptorily, "let us stay here! I want to talk to you. And we all let that girl absorb too much of our attention. It is most absurd!"

VII

It is not necessary to be good in order to be unhappy. Major Woolsey was acutely miserable. The Major's happiness had never been more than an orchid, for it was rooted in and nourished by his wife's belief in him; that gone, it had neither food nor foothold.

In his youth the Major had worshipped his beautiful young wife with a romantic affection. The other dewy enthusiasms and beliefs of that far-off hour had vanished beneath the scorching sun of middle life, leaving this sole survivor. The Major worshipped his wife still. The fact was patent to the most careless observer. Converse casually with the

Major, and he struck you but as that commonplace wreckage of a man which forty years of ease-loving and pleasure-seeking will make of any fine young fellow. Pulpy and unpleasant to the spiritual touch as jelly-fish dissolving in a beach-pool, such men are, but so entirely usual that you pass them without comment. But mention Mrs. Woolsey, and the Major's face melted, grew tender, glowed with a curious exaltation. If it was after dinner, his lip was likely to quiver as he toasted you "Woman," in his wine—that last glass which he should not have taken.

"Why, what a dear old boy he is," you would say to yourself in surprise, and go away pondering over this unexpected revelation of an unsubmerged ideal.

But the Major's worship of his wife, unaided, had not been efficacious for his

preservation from the moral wear and tear of existence. His virtues were old-fashioned. His vices—but the fashion of the vices is unchangeable. Not being equal to the task of lifting his conduct to her standards, he had devoted himself sedulously to concealing from her eyes the schism between her precepts and his practice. Having to do with a gentlewoman of the old school who knew little and cared less about the miasms of existence, he was singularly successful.

A preference for looking into the most flattering mirror in the house is but human. Given the choice of seeing himself through his own eyes or his wife's, the Major preferred the latter. The vision there indicated did not deceive, but it comforted him. After all, there surely must be something rather fine

about the man whose wife still thought him, at past sixty, the ideal gentleman of the school she had been trained to admire.

But now all that was over. It does not matter into which of the snares set for humanity — they are few in number, yet many there be who fall therein — the Major, stepping too carelessly one summer's day, tripped and went headlong for all the world to see.

The world's disapprobation the Major could have endured. The world was a hoary hypocrite, and he knew it. But when he turned to Elizabeth's eyes, long homes of adoration, and found them blank, his soul was rent. For three days he suffered silently, and then he spoke. And destiny decreed that his niece should hear him.

Arria had gone out on the eastern

balcony, opening from her own room, for an hour or two of serious meditation. Lying on a pile of cushions and looking up through the feathery branches of a locust-tree, which overshadowed her, to the blue sky beyond, she had tried to find out why her engagement no longer seemed to her the satisfactory solution of all her life which it had appeared at first. Its privileges had ceased to entertain, and its responsibilities loomed near and appalling. If one could only be engaged comfortably without having always at hand a middle-aged lover with haunting eyes! She had not bargained for that hungry, absorbing quality of glance which claimed and held the whole of her. It was highly unnecessary. She never looked at him like that!

These meditations were engrossing, but the drowsy August air and the drone of

the locusts prevailed against them, and she fell asleep.

Waking after an hour or two, she heard through the near window voices from the room adjoining. Sleepily she recognized that it must be her uncle who spoke, but his voice came harshly.

“For God’s sake, Elizabeth, say something to me. Do you think I can bear this?”

Silence.

“Elizabeth — Elizabeth,” the voice thickened and quavered in absolute abandonment, “I am not excusing nor denying, nor acquitting myself of anything. I have not led the kind of life you thought I led. It may be you are humiliated, hurt, disgusted — but I ask you, as the Lord is to judge you, *what of it?*”

Arria sprang up silently. These things

were not for her ears. She turned to the window, but it had been closed while she slept. She shook it. It was locked as well!

In heavy gusts the Major's voice went on:

"You know, God knows, whatever my failings, I love you. My sweet, think! What other question is there between you and me but that?"

"Hush!" a woman's voice cried tensely. "I cannot bear it. I cannot understand it. All other men—but not my husband. No, no, no!"

"You will never understand. You will never see your way through it. But if you can love me in spite of it, what will it matter? Can't you feel that? Elizabeth—my wife!"

A murmured answer.

"You can't mean that! Think! Why

Elizabeth, you kill me—you kill me. I have loved you forty years. Why . . . Elizabeth, I must make you see it as I do!”

Arria cowered against the window, trembling in every nerve. The tearing sound of a man's sobs, hoarse and terrible, was in her ears. She must get away from it somehow. She must. She caught up a book from the floor and with one quick blow broke the glass above the lock. The thick carpet drowned the sound of the falling fragments. She thrust her hand through the jagged hole, and in a second was safe in her own room.

She seized a handkerchief and hastily wrapped it around her bleeding wrist, still trembling. She must get out where the blue sky was, and the familiar, friendly sunshine, away from this atmosphere sur-

charged with the horror of an unknown force. The very air she breathed seemed to be electric with it, and she alone walked unmoved and uncomprehending.

The spell was on them all. At least — all but Roderick. She had found Florence's proximity volcanic from the first; then came her elderly lover to disturb her peace, and now — this. And this was worst of all. She had thought her uncle beyond being moved by anything but a bad investment or a bad dinner. It seemed the soul in him was still quick. Did the heart live to the grave's very verge? Was love a word to conjure with at sixty?

She hastened away from the house, down the long approach, not thinking where she went until, hearing the sound of wheels, she looked up and saw Sefton driving in at the gates. Perceiving her,

he threw the reins to his groom and jumped down. The man drove on, and Sefton turned to Arria, holding out both hands with a boyish eagerness.

Usually she accepted his greeting passively. Herself, she thought kissing a somewhat senseless performance, but if it was to his taste, very well. It was a lover's traditional privilege.

To-day, however, for some reason, it seemed sacrilegious as well as senseless. She stamped her foot impatiently.

"O go away!" she cried. "I really cannot bear that sort of thing now."

Then, sitting down at the foot of a tree by the drive, she burst into tears.

Sefton quietly sat down beside her, his air of immobile intensity more in evidence than usual. The glow had died out of his face, and taking up her hand in a matter-of-fact way he undid the blood-

stained handkerchief and looked at the cuts on her wrist.

"You have cut yourself severely," he said. "How did that happen?"

"I am not hurt. It is nothing," she said impatiently, and tried to draw away her hand, but he retained it, whereat she began to shed tears again.

"You are nervous. Tell me what has happened."

"I am not nervous. I never am. I was just crying — accidentally. I wish you would not hold my hand. I am not going to marry you. I am not going to marry anybody. It is all so irrevocable and horrible. One never gets over it."

"No," said Sefton slowly, "one never gets over it." He put her hand back in her lap with a sigh.

"But that is not a reason why you

should throw me over. And you are always reasonable," he said gravely.

A detestation of her own reasonableness sprang into life fullgrown in Arria's soul. Why had she ever educated people, herself included, to expect anything so odious of her?

"I am not—a marriageable person," she said hastily, trying to remove the traces of tears with her handkerchief.

"I differ with you there, you know."

"I do not"—she gulped over the objectionable term—"love you."

"You promised to try to learn. What has come between you and me?"

What indeed? Arria did not know. She only felt that a world's diameter separated her from the girl who had accepted with such serenity the enviable prospect of becoming Mrs. Sefton. The one essential thing just now was to get away and

be free. It did not matter whom she hurt, nor how.

She rose to her feet.

"I do not know. I do not want to think about it. Let me go, please. I want to — to take a walk. I shall never marry you — never."

The dumb reproach of his eyes did not hurt her, nor the helpless laxity of his firm-cut mouth. She only rejoiced that the conversation was drawing to an end. He had risen and stood aside.

"You have no cause to shun me, child," he said quietly. "I would not detain you against your will. We will talk of this some other day. And in the meantime, if it makes you happier, consider that I have released you — for the present."

VIII

A MAN may be an exemplary citizen and yet it may not be easy to recognize a portrait of him drawn by his *fiancée*. If it is difficult for him to live up to his own ideals, how hardly shall he compass those of the woman who loves him?

Roderick Kirke was walking along the highway toward sunset of the day which Arria had found so agitating. He moved with a quick, easy stride, singing under his breath as he went, but his thoughts were serious, for, with that comprehension of another's standpoint which was one of his marked characteristics, he was looking at himself through Florence's eyes, and the vision seemed ignoble.

Even according to his own standards he had observed certain defections in himself of late. As yet they were entirely abstract in their character, and he was not disposed to exaggerate their importance as a less robust nature might have done. Rather, he would be thankful that he had discovered his derelict tendencies while they were still formless and void. There is nothing like taking oneself in hand in time. He would stop where he was, thanking God, as an honest gentleman should, that no one was hurt but himself.

Having reached this decision, and regarding the matter as settled once for all, he forgave himself in Florence's name and lifted his eyes to note how far he had progressed upon his homeward journey.

He was passing through a little ravine whose sides were clothed with firs. Under

a tree half-way up the hill was a slender, dejected figure in a white frock. Her face was turned away from him, but the big mull hat with its pink roses was a familiar acquaintance.

He hesitated a second and made as if he would go on, then swerved abruptly, and throwing himself over the stone wall strode up the slope. Stopping at the girl's side, he took out his watch.

"Don't you know it is dinner-time at your house?" he said severely. "Why are you not on your way to dinner?"

Arria lifted her face to his joyously, as a child might have done. Roderick was such a good friend to her. If he would but talk to her now, it would lift her, as it always did, into a calm but happy world. The sight of him comforted her. Here, she felt, but knew not why, was shelter and safety.

"Do scold me!" she answered. "It is so restful. I have been trying to scold myself all the afternoon, and I simply can't do it."

He scrutinized her face. The traces of tears were still visible.

"Why is your doll temporarily stuffed with sawdust?" he demanded. "It is only temporary, you know. Tell me about it, if you can."

Arria's spirits rose unwarrantably. It is good to be called to account by a sympathetic soul when one suspects that one has made a mess of things.

"I have been breaking off my engagement with Mr. Sefton," she began obediently. "I had no idea engagements were so difficult to fracture. It—it is not a pleasant thing to do."

Roderick suppressed a movement of surprise, then sat down beside her on

the rock and began to pull a daisy to pieces with unnecessary violence.

“Outside of a humorous weekly, no,” he said drily. “Sefton is a good fellow. Besides his more obvious advantages, he is one of the few strong and honest men the Lord has made. I am afraid you have been hard on Sefton.”

“I know he is good. And strong. And reliable. I know all about his obvious advantages,” said Arria. “All these things had great weight with me. They have still. But somehow—I simply had to put an end to it. I don’t know why. He was so good he made me want to hurt him. I must have been too self-confident in the beginning. It was all a mistake!”

“How,” Roderick heard himself asking, his eyes fixed on the daisy, “did you happen to find that out?”

Arria paused. Then, with that impulse toward confidence which is in itself a subtle intoxication, rendering its subject momentarily irresponsible, she began her little tale.

She told it rapidly and picturesquely, sketching in lightly her sombre childhood, and dwelling a little upon the reactionary thirst for life and enjoyment with which it had inspired her. Her cheeks took a richer carmine as she talked. Her deep eyes grew more alive. She was absorbed in her subject, excited, interested. Her auditor she seemed to have forgotten.

“And so when Mr. Sefton came it seemed as if all my life had simply been leading up to that climax, and I accepted it as the natural and fitting one. Why not? Then, all at once, just as I supposed myself in port, arrived, I found I

was at sea and drifting. My content in the situation was all gone. I could not satisfy myself, nor him. Everything that had seemed solid and substantial melted away into mist. The beautiful and fitting climax to my life suddenly turned hideous and looked like something else.

“And then,” she turned and faced him with perplexed eyes, “people were always disturbing me by saying things about love and loving that I did not understand. Florence disturbs me. Even my uncle and aunt —” She stopped herself. That story was not hers to tell. “Even to them,” she said hurriedly, “love is very serious, and can still make life tragic — just think! — on the very outer edge of life. It seems almost incredible to me, but since it is a fact, it must be that there is something wrong with my theories. Everything I have thought

about it seems turned into nothingness. . . . And so I thought my engagement might as well turn to nothing too."

The dear, perplexed face was too near. It was intolerable! Roderick rose impetuously.

"Yes," he said brokenly, "it was an easy solution to the problem of your life — but it was not the answer in the book. And now —" he broke off, looked down at her, then set his teeth and hurried on. "Now you want to begin again. You want the real — the eternal. You want — to love. Dear, let me show you how!"

She looked up wonderingly at his agitated face.

Roderick too?

His hands were stretched toward her. How was it that without conscious volition she was standing beside him, her hands in his?

And how came it that their lips met?

"Ah! That," she cried sharply, trembling between wrath and tears, "that was not a kiss . . . it was an Event!"

"Do you not wish," he asked in a voice of tender triumph, "that there should be such events in your life — and in mine?"

"Certainly not!" said Arria, stooping to pick up her gloves and striving for her composure. "I do not want — events in my life that have no place there."

"Do you doubt, then," he said so low she scarcely heard, "to whom my kisses belong?"

"To Florence," she cried in sharp protest. "She has everything. She must have everything — if honour is anything but a name, if uprightness is, if we have not been living in a world of moral misconceptions all our lives."

"I think," muttered Roderick beneath his breath, "that honour is a theory too. Nothing is true but this."

"This is not true if it would make us false!"

"You admit then, that even for you—*this is?*" watching her with eyes whose appeal she knew not how to evade. How could she make him understand what she herself had not yet begun to apprehend?

"I think—" she began helplessly.

Roderick's face lit up. She could not deny it, then?

"Don't think! Ah, don't!" he said almost gaily. "You admit that you have made a failure of thinking. Let it alone for a while. Feel. Thinking isn't a fit occupation for an emotional being, anyhow."

Arria made no answer. She turned

and went down the little slope. When they were in the highway, "I must think," she said, "of Florence." But she said it mechanically and without conviction. It was more than difficult just then to think of anything but that new confusing tumult in her heart. "You — are engaged."

At this bald statement, Roderick frowned.

"Engagements have been known to be broken," he said with a touch of bitterness. "You, for instance, seem to have had no difficulty in breaking one this very afternoon. Such things happen and people live on. Suppose we consider the problem without that factor for a short time. We will think of what we owe other people later on. Just now — Arria, I want you to think of me."

She shook her head. That was a

fatally easy thing to do, but she did not mean to tell him so.

They walked in silence for a time.

“Those people,” said Roderick at last, speaking as one having authority, in a deep voice she had begun to dread, “who can never give up their beliefs for their feelings should stay in the intellectual world. It is where they belong. There is not enough law and order and sequence of things in the emotional life for them. Its contrasts are too sharp, its reactions are too violent, its results too causeless. It is not theirs. But it is the only real world just the same!”

“I never meant,” she said with quivering lip, “to make any excursions in the emotional world with you.”

They had reached the gates of Rosehedges, where the great trees made perpetual dusk, and she turned to go in.

With a swift, defiant gesture he caught her in his arms and her lips trembled beneath his.

“No,” he said, “I did not mean it either. But now that we have begun there shall be no returning. We must go on together to the end.”

IX

A NIGHT of reflection showed the events of the day before in a lurid light to Arria.

Of reflection? Of action rather! She found it no passive thing to be called upon to face the unbelievable, to down the invincible, to acknowledge the supreme.

Great surges of feeling caught her and tossed her to and fro. She was horribly wretched. She was incredibly happy. In each mood the other seemed irrational. But what was it to be rational? Was it not to cede to the strongest logic? There was in the sound of Roderick's voice, the look of his eye, the touch of his hand, a potency of argument she

had been unwilling heretofore to accord even to pure reason.

Of one thing she was sure. These were the main currents of life. Was it not better to be drowned in stemming them than to float in the shallows safely? How strong they were! Heretofore the assurance that she was a reasonable and reasoning being had seemed sufficient guarantee that she could win from the crises of existence a subjective victory at least. As well attempt the crossing of torrents on cobwebs.

For one brief, perilous hour it seemed a beautiful thing to be thus weak compared to the strength of love. In such weakness she might well exult and be glad. To drift was better than to strive with the current that never has been stayed. Why should she struggle? She was but drifting the way the great tides go.

Life grew luminous before her sleepless eyes. The end and all the way were plain. She had looked forward unconsciously all her young years for something supreme to happen, for the hour of destiny to strike. For her it had come, and it was — this. "I am on the down-hill side of life, now," she thought, and shivered at the fancy.

Growing calmer, she fell to wondering. If this was love, it was strangely simple. Her strongest feeling was an overwhelming sensation of home. Where Roderick was, was her predestined abiding-place. It must be so. There she belonged. There was joy as well as peace. She exulted in the thought. Why not? It made her happy. It was so easy, so normal, to be happy.

Then the inevitable reaction came with frightful strength. The thought of Florence stung her, scorched her, made her

hide her face even from the darkness. If only it could have been some other woman! It was true, as Roderick had said, engagements were easily broken. So were some hearts. And Florence, who believed in nothing, who cared for nothing, who wanted nothing but just this thing — this which was Arria's own, hers inalienably, it seemed, yet hers only as the thief's booty is his own — what of Florence? It was terrible, and yet —

“It is very singular!” she said aloud. “I am trying to despise myself. I cannot — yet I know I ought.”

She had never conceived as possible the appalling divorce of the reason and the conscience which she presently perceived in the depths of her consciousness. She thought herself incredibly base, yet felt herself absolved from all hint of wrong-doing.

“It is wrong, wrong, wrong!” she said, yet felt no wrong, and wondered helplessly, not knowing she had stumbled into the spiritual region of the magnetic pole, where compasses are useless and the seafarer steers by the stars alone.

When the day dawned it found her by her window watching for it in weariness of spirit. But there is a peace in exhaustion such as vigour does not know. And with the coming of the light came also illumination, not perhaps upon her duty, but upon her intention. Duties are compulsory, and Arria felt strongly within her the consciousness of choice. What she meant to do was perhaps not necessary — she did not dogmatize — but it was preferable. She chose it. She had proved the philosophy of self-seeking a mistake. She would try that of self-abnegation. She knew she was stronger than

her cousin. Our strength is our most exacting taskmaster. It demands for itself stony roads to travel, heavy hills to climb, burdens to bear. All this Arria had never known before. Faintheartedly she recognized it now, longing for that weakness which is the happier lot.

Later in the day her intention took shape in a letter—her first love-letter.

“I am afraid,” she wrote, “that you are right. This must be love. It stirs me so.

“You think, or seem to think—I cannot be sure, for you only showed me what you felt, not what you thought at all—that it is an invincible thing, that it comes and takes us and makes of us what it will. But I seem to see very clearly that it is what we make of it. It comes like any other human experience, like life itself, and we are free to make of it what we will, a high thing or a low.

"I do not choose to make an evil thing of mine, false, selfish, base. I love you too much — already — to love you so.

"But I am not pretending for an instant that I like to be good — if good it is. I do not. I hate to give you up. I do not know how to rid myself of the thought of you. It is around me like the atmosphere already. But I can teach myself to bear that, I suppose; and by and by — I am afraid it will take years — the thought of you will lose its keenness, it will not hurt me so. And I shall get interested in other things — there are lots of things in life worth caring for, it is not as if I were Florence and only cared for one — and so out of pain will come indifference, and out of indifference quietness, and perhaps when I am forty I shall be able to

look forth on my soul and say, 'This is the peace which springs from righteousness.' I dare say I shall grow to be as great a Pharisee as that!

"I don't like to contemplate such an ending. It would be easier to die at once, and more beautiful. I wish I could go away into another world where I could hurt no one by cherishing you. But that would be too easy. As you said the other day, the easy answers never are the right ones.

"I am quite sure this is the right one. I know I can live without you, and you will soon forget me, quite. It would be impossible to be unhappy where Florence was."

Armed with this document, which she felt settled everything and would be as final to Roderick as to herself, Arria set forth that afternoon to meet him where

they had encountered each other the day before. She had promised to do this on the ground that the situation demanded candid consideration from them both. It was her intention to put the letter in his hands and then return at once. She had written all that she wished to say. What he might say, she was resolutely determined not to hear.

But Roderick took the letter and, having bent to kiss the hands that gave it, tore it in two without so much as unfolding it.

"Don't you suppose," he demanded, "that I know all that can possibly be said against this? You cannot tell me anything I have not thought of. I know the arguments by heart, and they do not convince. Now you must hear mine."

"I wish," cried Arria petulantly, "you would type-write those arguments—or let me hear them blind-fold and from another room! Your eyes are too eloquent. It is not fair. How can I judge justly when you look at me like that?"

"I need all the advantages that I have," said Roderick inflexibly. "Listen, Arria."

"You have no philosophy," she reproached him wildly, "no fortitude."

"No, thank Heaven! Philosophy be hanged! Life is a rack and we are stretched upon it to be tortured. He is the best philosopher who can say most calmly as each different bone is dislocated, 'Ah, here is a fresh sensation!' For my part I am willing not to be one," cried Roderick hotly. "The only epitaph I covet is '*When he breathed, he was a man.*'"

"No one will deny it to you, I am afraid. You are no saint."

"It is not one of my ambitions. I have noticed that the paths which lead to Heaven usually lead away from Paradise. But all this is irrelevant."

"I despise you," she said desperately; "but," relenting as she saw his face, "if somebody had to come to despise you, I am glad it is I. I couldn't bear it, to have any one else despise you as I do just now."

He brushed her words aside.

"Ah, listen, Arria," he said, and this time she found no interruption.

To have relieved one's mind of lofty sentiments seems, somehow, at certain crises the equivalent of a noble deed, and produces in the same way that feeling of reaction through which we descend painlessly to lower levels.

Arria, conscious that her purpose, at least, had satisfied her soul, relaxed her spiritual tension and lingered. Once in every man's life, it is given him to speak as if indeed a coal from the sacred fire had touched his lips. Arria listened to Roderick's burning words with a hunger which grew by what it fed upon. And when he grew more daring and reinforced his arguments with action, she did not shrink even from his kisses.

Then she returned — to re-live the conflict of the night before, to fight the fight with keener reproach, with yet more ecstatic joy.

X

THE Major was ill.

"I can't understand what the doctor means, dear," said Mrs. Woolsey, clinging to her daughter's hand, as they stood watching the physician's carriage drive away. "Yesterday he insisted upon a nurse, and to-day he said something about nervous prostration and something about the danger of heart-failure. What does he mean? There is nothing seriously wrong with your father."

"Darling, he means papa is very ill."

"Very ill, Florence?"

The girl bent and kissed her mother silently. The elder woman turned away

and began to mount the stairs. Her strength failed her, and she stood leaning against the rail. How long the way was. Would she never get to the top? It seemed hours since Florence had spoken. Heart-failure? What if he died before she reached him? The world reeled darkening at the thought, and she fell back upon the stair.

Meanwhile the Major lay upon his weary bed and needed no telling to know that the dear, warm human life he had loved and lived so carelessly was slipping — slipping from his nerveless fingers.

What a life it had been! Keenly his early years came back to him. The irresponsible rapture of the boy in life and sport was his again. How fine and crisp the winters were. There were no such winters now. What had been white-and-gold jests with the blood of

youth, were long, chill affronts to the slow currents of later years.

And what a green glory had been upon the winter wheat when May came at last, and the level sun struck across the fields and turned the perfumed, whitening orchards into gold!

He remembered the joy of his first gun, and the awakening of the sportsman's instinct as he had followed his father across the yellow stubble in the ecstatic air. Ah, those were days, and that was life, more satisfying, it seemed now, than all the years that had come between.

In and out of all his recollection ran the river, a silver thread to bind the years upon. Only those who have lived beside it know how it has become the river of their love. The Major had lived beside it always.

It was upon the river, he remembered, in a gay party going down to the Point, that he had first met Elizabeth, a stranger from the South.

Across the years that sweet young face smiled to him as it had smiled on the day of their meeting; as it had done always since.

But now he lay dying, and she gave no sign. Once it had almost seemed to him that Elizabeth was strenuous and devoted enough to impose her opinion of him upon the Lord himself. Now he wished that she might be brought to share what he vaguely believed to be the Creator's tolerance.

The Major was religious after a fashion. Loyalty to the Church came after loyalty to the State. The point of view was hereditary with the Woolseys, and to be respected. As to his personal

relations with the Infinite, he felt a confidence that He who made man, knowing him but dust, would overlook his entrance into another life somewhat soiled with the grime of earth. The old Persian had said it:

"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

The rough-and-ready righteousness of the man who is his own worst enemy was ample cloak for him. As for Hell, it was where Elizabeth had been keeping him for the last week. When he thought of it, it seemed to him that this, and no other thing, was killing him. As a matter of fact, he knew he had been warned often enough to let stimulants and nicotine alone — that his heart would not stand them — but barring a few bad turns which had not frightened him sufficiently he had gone on well enough until the stress of the other day.

Strange! One might think it would have been the fragile woman upon whom all this would have told most heavily. It was the kind of shock romances said killed women. Instead, it was he whose pulses were weakening hour by hour, as he lay fretting at her absence and her coldness, while she remained aloof, unmoved.

"She might forgive a dying man," said the Major, with tears of self-pity in his eyes.

While her husband thought these things, Mrs. Woolsey sat in half-conscious misery upon the stair until her strength came back to her, and she made her way to the little study at the top of the flight. It was the Major's den. His books and papers were there. His dressing-gown, redolent of tobacco, lay across the worn leather chair in front of the desk. There she sat down

and putting her head back against it, strove to think.

She had been reared in the old school of theology as well as of manners, and she believed, not that the punishment of a wasted life is here and now, but that it lies in a dread hereafter.

"He is not good, and he is going to die," she said slowly to herself. A dumb terror stole over her at the thought. How would it be with that poor soul, so kin to earth, when he fared forth to the Infinite? She realized that she could not imagine her husband in a spiritual world, and a sickening revulsion to life and death alike laid hold of her. The dread of the Unknown tore her heart.

The terror which she felt for her husband fought with the resentment that had been in her heart against him until the struggle grew keen anguish.

“O God!” she said, “I cannot bear his dying nor his living! What shall I do?—what shall I do?” and then, “O God, be merciful to him!”

But the God whom she knew was a God of justice, not of mercy. Who could doubt what decree was registered in the impenetrable fastnesses of that dark Will against the man who, having all good gifts, had wasted all, and faced old age a spiritual pauper?

How long she sat there numb with the horror of the thought she did not know, but at last her soul flamed in revolt. Let God be cruel if he must. It was no more than just. But as for her, in the few hours that remained to her of their long comradeship, she would be merciful. Justice was the attribute of gods, perhaps, but not of women. And he, pitiful failure that he was, was yet the best that earth

had given her to answer to her young ideals and still the hunger of her heart.

Rising, she went to his room. The nurse withdrew. The Major and his wife faced each other pallidly. She came forward to the bed and knelt down. She had meant to be very quiet, very calm — a scene was the worst possible thing for him — but her sensitive face quivered, and her voice was broken beyond her control.

“I did not know that — that you were so ill, Roger,” she stammered.

The Major lay back upon his pillows and regarded her with the forced indifference of exhaustion.

“Pray do not agitate yourself, my dear,” he said courteously but feebly. “I have already lived too long — since I have outlived your respect.”

She caught his hands, already shrunken,

and her kisses and her tears fell upon them fast. She spoke words that he did not understand, that he was too weak to try to understand, but among her confused and tender murmurs, this was clear :

“ But not my love . . . but not my love ! ”

XI

RODERICK KIRKE had gone through life easily and uprightly. He did not think overmuch about himself, but he had always had a clear conviction that he was a little too fine to be conformed to all the manners and customs of this wicked earth. His absorptions in life were chiefly intellectual and æsthetic. Things vicious and vulgar repelled him because they were not sufficiently interesting to counterbalance their lack of beauty. Temperament had served him in the stead of character, and it was his tacit assumption that in conduct he would always choose the higher course because he was himself.

He had seen men caught in the whirl-

wind of passionate emotion, and had noted curiously that it seemed to make no difference to them whether they were victims to righteous or unrighteous loves. Personally, he believed the ethical element necessary to the beauty of love, and failed even to conceive of the possible supremacy over himself of a feeling which did not satisfy his sense of honour.

Sharp across these pleasing preconceptions swept the first vital emotion of his self-centred life, making such havoc as the hail makes in May among the apple-blooms. He too was in the net. How it had happened he did not know. The great affections offer no explanation of themselves. Theirs is the simple "I am" of Jehovah.

He was honest in his resolve to say nothing, but did a strong love ever yet remain untold? Circumstances league

themselves against silence. All life is on the side of speech. The voice of honour grows faint and far away. Nearer, sweeter, stronger voices drown its protest. "Have I not a right to my own?" asks the rebellious heart, and Nature answers "Yes."

But after a life-time spent in cultivating a sense of duty in its more imaginative aspects, one does not revert to a cruder standard without difficulty. Therefore the two days following his interview with Arria were spent by Roderick Kirke in hell.

There is one hell of half-hearted struggle which has but a single predestined end, and another of mute acquiescence in a situation whose ignominy the vanquished one feels as the victim of the inquisition felt in his flesh the spikes of the Iron Maid. The second of

these is the deeper damnation, and Roderick experienced its full bitterness.

The reflection that his self-scorn was part of the price due to destiny for the terrifying sweetness of this masterful emotion helped him to bear it, but such alleviation was not great.

Satiety in suffering comes soon to the vigorous. At the end of two days Roderick felt a brief reaction. It was time that he did something, even though action were ignoble. The process of putting an end to his engagement could hardly be more intolerable than the present situation.

"In the morning," he said to himself, "I will go to Florence," and rested in that decision.

The morning, when it dawned, proved to usher in one of those incomparable days of early September which seem to

hallow all deeds done in them. Under its influence Roderick went down to his breakfast in a frame of mind which was comparatively cheerful. Perhaps the situation was not so tragic as he had supposed.

But just at the close of the meal a note was brought to him.

“DEAR RODERICK : Do you know you have not seen us for three days ? My father is ill. I have not dared to tell my mother how ill he is. I am frightened—and I don’t know what to do.

“FLORENCE.”

He stared at the words protestingly.

“O God!” he said between his teeth, as he grasped the full significance of the situation. His mother, glancing up, caught such a look of misery upon his face that for the moment she believed herself dreaming. Who had ever seen Roderick look like that?

"Did you speak? What is the matter?" she inquired.

He handed her the note.

"Florence is in trouble. I must go over there," he said heavily.

"Oh, the poor girl! I wish I could do something. Pray go to her at once," the mother urged. But when he had left her it was not over her neighbour's troubles that she knit her forehead anxiously.

"The Major has outlived the comeliness of his life, and even Florence's trouble would not make Roderick look like *that*," she said. "My son suffers, and I can neither know nor help," and the blinding, bitter tears of a mother's ignorance and helplessness came slowly to her eyes.

Roderick meanwhile had gone away sick at heart. There are limits even to

the healthy fundamental selfishness of youth and love. The difficult task had become impossible. He could not withhold from this daughter of a dying father the help which she sought as her right.

Through the days that followed he found many things to do at Rosehedges. In those sharp hours when the proximity of death draws closer together the souls who must remain, no claim upon our human tenderness is lightly disallowed. Scorning himself for a hypocrite, yet longing to help the two women in their necessity, Roderick made himself helpful, tender, strong, for the day of need. It was to be done, but he never afterwards remembered just how he had accomplished it. The days were dreamlike and indistinct to him even as he moved through them. One recollection only, of all that time, possessed vividness and coherence.

He had prevailed upon Mrs. Woolsey, who was nervous and exhausted, to go out with him that morning for the air and sunshine that she needed. The carriage had come to the door, and he was awaiting her in the morning-room, when Arria, not knowing any one was there, entered, singing softly to herself as she came.

Roderick had seen nothing of her during the Major's illness, and the sight of her now suddenly dispelled the clouds that had been about him. He came forward silently with outstretched hands, remembering only his need of her. She looked at him an instant and drew back. Her glance was visionary and remote, as if she were looking from another world. His own eyes were dogged, defiant, yet beseeching, and his face was not hard to read.

“Do you find,” she said very gently, “that engagements seem as easy to break as they once did?”

He bent his head an instant without replying. It was her privilege to be ironic if she found comfort so. He found no comfort anywhere, but that did not matter. Nothing mattered any longer, since in the coil life had made around him he could no longer pretend to stand erect.

“Do you suppose,” he said at last, “that I love you less because I serve her more? Or that I should not be glad to keep my self-respect,—if I could? It is not necessary for you to torture me to make me understand my position!”

She made a gesture of bewildered protest.

“Oh, no, no, no!” she said, “that is not what I meant at all. I never thought

of reproaching you. It is only that—that I wanted you to confess how impossible—anything is, for you and me. Surely now you must see it as I see it.”

“You ‘only want’ me to surrender both my love and my self-respect! It will go hard if I do not keep one of them!”

“That is impossible,” she said hastily.

“Nothing is impossible. I am willing to pay the price. See here,” and he caught her roughly by the wrists, “if you say the word, I am ready,—ready, do you understand?—to tell her now, this hour, that I can never marry her. Do you wish it? Shall I do it?”

“Oh, no, no, no!” she cried again. “What a selfish, brutal, hideous idea!”

“Then—what *do* you want?”

Arria looked at him helplessly. That men were restive and impracticable when most it behooved them to be strong and

controlled had not been one of her preconceptions about them. Recognizing the fact, she bent before it, perceiving that she had expected the impossible.

"You are not treating me well," he went on, harshly, as it seemed to her.

"Men always say that when they are behaving badly," cried the girl, generalizing from the instance before her in self-defence. "I don't know what you mean by treating you well. I am trying to help you do what you ought to do. I did not mean to hurt you."

He envisaged her dumbly, and in his face she read all the pain and passion, the revolt, and shame, and longing, of his soul so clearly that it silenced her.

When she spoke again it was uncertainly and with timidity.

"Does it — does it make it any easier for you to know that I think the way you comfort Florence is — is adorable?"

"No. It does not make it any easier."

"Is — is there anything that I can say — "

Ah, those beseeching eyes!

"But this is so selfish!" she protested faintly.

"So selfish — and so beautiful," said Roderick, as he drew her face to his.

She caught his hand and kissed it, and turned quickly to leave the room. Mrs. Woolsey was descending the stairs, and Arria heard her step thankfully. Obviously, further interviews between herself and Roderick were out of the question if they were always to end in this way.

"It does not seem," she said to herself wearily, as she climbed the stairs, "to be of the slightest use to *reason* with a man. Perhaps it isn't any use to reason with myself."

As she passed her cousin's door, Florence called to her. She was lying down, but lifted her head as Arria entered.

"Roderick was there, wasn't he?" she said. "I knew he had entered the house, though I don't know how I knew it. I hope Providence is laying up a reward for Roderick. May Heaven particularly bless him! Arria, I should die these days if it were not for him," and Florence sat upright and tossed her tumbled hair from her forehead restlessly. "Life looks incomprehensible to me. It seems futile and disgraceful, a long humiliation growing bitterer year by year, ending at last—who knows?—perhaps in extinction. I should want to be done with it at once if it were not for Roderick and the things I can't help believing in when I am with him. I believe in him most of all. I am irreverent, I suppose, but I

sometimes wonder if the religious people—the real ones like my mother—get as much consolation out of their belief in God.”

“He does not make me feel things like that,” said Arria, looking down at her with a playfulness that was obvious and a seriousness that was hidden.

“Is that an intimation that my feelings about Roderick depend upon subjective causes?” asked Florence. “My precious child, what difference does it make? They constitute the most beautiful experience in my life, and I don’t know whence it comes. What if I may perhaps have attributed to him more virtues than he has? Other people cannot make me think them more beautiful than they are. It is all the same thing in the end. I am happy—and it is Roderick who makes me so!”

XII

THE days went slowly by. Weakening steadily, the Major lingered through the golden September weather, as if loath to leave such a beautiful and seductive world, until at last the hour came when he could stay no longer.

The hush of death wrapped the house, and then, as even that stillness must, gave way before the encroaching stir of life.

There were plans to be made, business to be transacted. A thousand cares and questions broke their life. Through all the chequered days Roderick remained Mrs. Woolsey's right hand, and Arria avoided him with an almost prayerful conscientiousness.

Death is an experience only less great to those who remain than to those who go. In those unreal days of its presence, which yet seemed to hold Earth's only verity, Arria, exhausted in body, but exalted in spirit, laid hold, or thought she did, upon reality.

She had gone out in the early morning when the air was cool and the sun was shining through the diminished screen of ripening leaves, and made her way down across the thick undergrowth of shrubbery which had been allowed to climb up the bluff at its own will, until she came to a quiet corner where she had often been before. The river was in sight, and beyond it the hills.

She was harassed, perplexed, sad. That careless self-confidence with which she began the summer had quite vanished now. The world loomed before her,

great, difficult, cruel. What did it all mean? And what was she to do with her poignant share of the tangles existence had made for her? Was life indeed, as Florence had said, futile and disgraceful, a slow descent from the heights of youth down a rough, shameful, ever-darkening road? Did one cherish ideals only to relinquish them? Was it meant that each soul should seek and take its own though at another's cost? Was she like all the rest? Daily, renouncement grew more difficult. Should she succumb at last?

Oh, no! She laughed at the thought. What did a few failures prove, or even the failure of all mankind? With the morning sun upon the world, and the crisp air that prophesied of frost against her cheeks, she found a better answer. She saw as she had never seen before

the verity of the axiom that life is a struggle. Some must succeed in the conflict. To accept life as it seems to be, to take the destiny thrust upon us, to yield to the outer world, is to cease to live. Surely the immortal armies are made up of those who have refused to become plastic in the grasp of an experience which would destroy their visions of life and character.

Oh, kind, brave, friendly world! It is good to fight. The breath of life is sweeter on our lips, existence is more serious, even more noble, when we see that it is warfare. We may war under false banners, but it is essential that we fight.

For the first time in her life she was conscious of the slackening of that demand for personal happiness which is the slogan of the very young. Happiness seemed for the moment of less value than

steadfastness in whatever road she should mark out to travel.

Across her soul there came with a rush of tender reminiscence of that mother, never so well understood as in this hour, the words of one of those serene, chill precepts she had heard so often in her earliest years.

"Unhappy am I because this has happened to me? Not so, but happy am I though this has happened to me . . . neither crushed by the present nor fearing the future."

And what was that other sunnier saying? Ah, yes, she remembered.

"Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature!"

"My mother knew," said Arria to herself. "It is the only way to live. We are here to suffer—and to say we do not suffer, because suffering is worth while."

She bent her head in the consciousness of that deep turning of the will which is more an action than a prayer. "Dear God," she said, "since I have chosen not to be happy, let me be a little good."

When at last she rose to return to the house, it was with a curious exultation in her soul and her head full of plans for the future.

Difficult as was rationality in her own person, it was nothing compared to the task of making Roderick reasonable. Reluctantly she renounced the effort. It would be very beautiful to know that he saw the situation as she saw it. The heights of renunciation are chilling and difficult to one who climbs them unaccompanied. But her expostulations with him in the past had all terminated in one way, and she had no reason to expect that a different fortune would attend any fresh attempts.

“But three kisses are not very many when that is all one is ever going to take. I think even Florence might forgive me those if she knew. Three times — or was it four? — in a whole life!” thought Arria.

The conversion of Roderick being hopelessly out of the question, the only thing left for her to do was to go away. Her course was simplified by the fact that the Major’s will, made several years before, left her an income of a thousand dollars, which, added to her own, made her a young person of independent means. In the scholastic world, which she purposed to re-enter, fifteen hundred a year is a very decent income.

Her old enthusiasm for the scholar’s existence, simple, refined, and strenuous as it is, revived as she laid her plans, which called for two or three years of foreign study and the attainment of a

doctor's degree as a preliminary step. The intellectual life looked a haven of refuge after the stress of the last few months. In it was safety, security, peace.

"I think it must require a very wise, strong person to love and be loved as it should be done," thought the girl dejectedly — "somebody wiser than I, at least. I am too stupid for anything but scholarship. It is far better that I should go back to it."

XIII

“BUT you must not go away from us, dear,” protested Mrs. Woolsey tenderly. “I cannot think your uncle would have approved.”

She said this with an air of finality. Love and death, the arch-deceivers, had combined to beguile her into forgetfulness of those bitter days when her idol had tottered to its fall. The Major’s opinion was now, as formerly, the ultimate authority.

“If you needed me,” said Arria, “if” — rather forlornly — “any one needed me, I should be very glad to stay. But no one does. And we must all live our own lives, you know.”

Mrs. Woolsey did not know. The sentiment had not been current when she was twenty-two. When it was stated as a self-evident truth, however, she felt unequal to disproving it.

"You are too young," she urged, "to be so far away from your natural guardians. I can't think of you alone in a foreign city with only another girl of your own age for a companion. It is impossible, dear child."

"But people do it every day. It is different when you are known to be a student. And I *must* go."

However often this conversation was repeated, and for a time it was a daily dialogue between Arria and her aunt, the end was always the same. The decisive, yet despairing ring of the girl's voice as she urged that she must go was not an argument. Yet it finally prevailed

to win a reluctant and unconvinced recognition of her freedom to do as she saw fit. Mrs. Woolsey was too just—or too gentle—to reproach her niece for being a modern girl, but she could and did reproach modern life for the untoward tendencies which spoiled a young person who was otherwise fitted to have graced the ranks of girlhood in a less perverse generation.

The theory that we must all live our own lives was one which Florence comprehended better than her mother could.

“I don’t in the least think the dear Lord intended you to live that sort of life,” she said with conviction. “I am so sure of it I might almost say I am in his confidence on the point. You are too essentially attractive to sacrifice your heart to your head. Still, if you must

make the experiment, you must. But I prophesy it will not succeed."

"My—other experiment did not succeed," said Arria. "I cannot fail always, in everything."

Florence hesitated. The broken engagement had been lost sight of in the stress of the Major's illness, and the two girls had never discussed the situation freely.

"Your other experiment was preliminary," Florence now said slowly. "The first venture of a thinking being—and you are too much of one—into the emotional world is seldom a success. The next time your fortune will be happier. The world professes to disbelieve it, but feeling is an acquired taste for those whose minds have been trained while their hearts are idle. But, like all such tastes, it is strong when

once obtained. Have you seen Mr. Sefton since?"

"No," murmured Arria guiltily. "I was afraid he would be too impressive a spectacle. And it was not necessary. He has only been here to make inquiries about you and Aunt Elizabeth. I should like to thank him for his solicitude, his desire to do something for you, but on my own account I would rather not see him."

"You must have treated him very badly," mused Florence.

"I was brutal," confessed Arria dejectedly.

"Irreparable brutality is an unpleasant thing to remember," said Florence. "I am glad you are going to that friend of yours, where there will be nothing to remind you of your worries. You are pale and thin. I asked Roderick if he

didn't think so, and he said he had not seen you for so long he did not know. I am afraid" — she took her cousin's hand affectionately — "that in my own troubles I have forgotten to look after you. If I have been selfish, you must forgive me, dear."

It was true that Roderick had not seen Arria. She had avoided him pertinaciously, but such a condition of things could not last, and, recognizing its precariousness, Arria resolved to forestall the end. It was now October, and Florence and Mrs. Woolsey were about to leave Rosehedges for two or three bracing weeks in the quietest village the Green Mountains afford. Arria had planned to go instead to a friend in New Hampshire, and afterwards, as soon as might be, she proposed to join a school-mate who was studying in Germany.

Roderick heard these plans at second-hand from Florence with deepening impatience and resentment. Why did not Arria let him talk to her? He could take no decisive step involving both of them without seeing her. The false position in which he stood was wearing upon him perceptibly. His nerves were becoming fiddle-strings, and even Florence, to whom he had striven to show only his old debonair serenity, complained of his fitful moods.

When Florence asked what he thought of Arria's intentions, he responded that they were grotesque; that she was about as well adapted to the voluntary abnegation, loneliness, and hard work of the scholar's life as a South Sea Islander to an Arctic winter; she had cleverness, doubtless, but not more than was needed in the performance of the ordinary duties

of feminine existence, and that she would show better judgment if she confined herself to the latter.

This outburst, of which he was rather ashamed, was a momentary relief. After it he wrote a brief note to Arria demanding an interview peremptorily.

He was compelled to go to New York the following day upon some business he had volunteered to arrange for Mrs. Woolsey, and was detained two days. Returning, he found upon his desk a letter in Arria's hand, posted in a New Hampshire village.

She had striven hard to make it brief, but without success. It seemed that the making of a dictionary would be but a slight task compared to compressing into three pages of letter-paper the thousand things that burningly demanded to be said to him. Also, it is a difficult thing

to utter only words of wisdom when one is longing to speak those of tenderness. The letter appeared cold and stiff to her when finished, and she shed tears over it, marvelling how anything written in her heart's blood could be so pale.

This was what she wrote:

“MY DEAR RODERICK: I have no intention of seeing you at present. I do not care to see you. I am more than contented not to see you. Is this definite enough? Your note asked for something definite.

“I think Florence will take her mother to the Carolinas after they come back from the mountains, and I hope you will follow them there. I am tired, and they do not need me. I have come to a school friend for awhile. I have learned so much about life this summer that it is absolutely necessary I should take a rest from living and have time to think it over.

“My friend is a happy soul who lives in peace and sunshine among her books, writes little songs, and regards this world as a Paradise. I think of a fly in amber when I see her. I shall not stay here long. Her atmosphere is too sweet for me. I like the

world,—the real world, where the Flesh and the Devil walk ravening, and the soul fights blindly between them,—better than any imitation heaven. There will be time enough to be contented after we get to the real one, if we do. Meanwhile I like the discontent, the things that hurt, if hurt they must, the hard work, the uncertainty, the unhappiness even,—all the things that we suppose distinguish this world from the next. Life is glorious,—even when it isn't.

“As for my plans, I am going to take refuge in the intellectual world (where you once told me I belonged) from the stress of an emotional life which is too much for me. I shall find a great many things to do, and working I shall forget the things I ought never to have known.

“And yet, for teaching me I thank you. I thank God daily that I have seen the face of love. Though I fought against believing it, my mother was right. *Non dolet* is the seal with which we must sign all earthly experiences. It does not hurt—it never hurts — *to know*.

“And so, good-by. This is final, you know.

“ARRIA JAMES.”

The young man put the letter down upon the desk and eyed it drearily.

He was tired too. The intolerable strain of the situation had told upon him, and he was ready to pay heavily for peace, let it arrive in what shape it might.

What came next? Should he follow Arria and extort from her heart, as he believed he might, unwilling and embittered concessions which her spirit did not, and never would endorse? With all her philosophy, she was a woman, and therefore could be convinced, momentarily at least, that there is no logic but love's own. Or should he accept the situation as it was, and gather from the wreck such salvage as he could: item, one much bruised but still serviceable sense of honour; item, a wife who was one of the most piquant and interesting women in the world.

Either course looked for the moment

equally cheerless and distasteful. In his depressed mood the whole situation seemed squalid, and the best happiness he dared hope for looked insufficient to compensate for the torment already suffered.

He picked the letter up and turned it over. The low autumn sun came out just then and sent a ray full across the page, blurring his sight. The last sentence "This is final," seemed to detach itself from the sheet and danced fantastically before his weary eyes in the strong yellow radiance.

"So be it, then," he said, with one long breath, and his head fell upon his hands.

XIV

So the summer was over at last.

The cab made its tortuous way through the crowded streets, and the girl within it looked out at the squalid procession of the city's life with unheeding eyes. She was thinking how curious a thing it is that by an effort of the will, we mortals, puny and irresolute as we are, can actually bring things to pass. It seemed strange and unreal that she should be on her way to the steamer, about to sail for Europe, leaving behind her the people who in the last six months had made life so vivid to her that all the rest of her years seemed remote and pale by comparison. Yet

she had willed to leave them, and her frail resolve was about to become reality.

At this point her musings were interrupted. The cabman drove upon the dock, announced that he could go no further, and demanded two dollars. Arria remembered distinctly that a carriage to the steamer had been one of the items on the hotel bill she had just paid, and fumbled in her chatelaine bag to find the receipted account. The cabman waxed abusive and loud-voiced, while Arria's cheeks grew hot. Certainly the bill was there, but it eluded her fingers.

People jostled her in passing as she stood there. A pair of snorting horses almost ran her down. The din grew confusing. Would she never find that bill?

"Good-morning," said a man at her elbow, lifting his hat. She turned with

a start to recognize Mr. Sefton. His very existence had passed out of her mind in the last few weeks, but she was none the less glad to see him in this small emergency, which he seemed to understand by intuition. He assumed control of the situation forthwith. The cabman was disposed of, and Arria found herself and her belongings transferred to the steamer's deck without loss of time.

"Mrs. Woolsey wrote me from Aiken the date of your sailing," he explained, in a matter-of-fact voice which made the relations of sentiment between them seem infinitely remote, and put Arria at her ease at once. "Are you sure that you have everything you need? Rugs enough, and all that? Where are the people you are with? You are not crossing alone, surely?"

"Oh, no. There is one of Aunt Eliza-

beth's friends on board. I am to share her stateroom, and she has promised to take care of me. A friend of my own is to meet me on the other side. Aunt Elizabeth would not let me go under any other conditions and disapproved of these. I just had to accept her disapproval, as one does bad weather or any natural phenomenon. She cannot help disapproving."

"You are going in for a career, I understand."

Arria frowned.

"Career is such a vulgar, pretentious sort of word," she said with deprecation.

"All I want is — something to do."

The man looked down at her with kindly, impenetrable eyes.

"Ah! I hope you will get what you want," he said quietly. "But your demands are not as modest as perhaps you think them."

The girl looked puzzled.

"They say there is not happiness enough to go around," she said, "but surely work is different. There must be enough of that."

"Congenial work, labour that is really fitted to our needs and our ability, is the second in rank of earth's great blessings, and it is almost as rare as the first."

"I cannot believe that," said Arria positively. "You must be mistaken. I am sure I am right. There is work for everybody. There is some for me, and I am going to find it."

"You — are young."

"What do you — what does everybody mean by saying that? What is it to be young?"

His face relaxed its seriousness a little as he answered, "Youth is that uninteresting stage in life in which it still seems

comparatively easy to find and do one's duty."

"Do you mean," she demanded, "that duty gets harder and harder? Don't we ever accomplish, ever achieve? In the moral life is there no such thing as arriving?"

He smiled at her vehemence, as even those who loved her usually smiled at Arria's tempestuous earnestness about abstract ideas.

"No," he answered, "we never arrive. The rest of our life is spent in learning over again and again the things we learn before we are twenty-five. Ethical lessons are to maturity what the multiplication table is to the child. We conquer them only by dint of a thousand repetitions. We are continually losing what we think we have gained, and simply to hold our ground is a perpetual struggle."

She shook her head, profoundly unconvinced.

“You will know that and many other things when we next meet,” he said. “I am afraid that signal meant that I must leave you now. I hope you will have a pleasant voyage and find your work all you wish it to be.—I spoke to the deck-steward about bringing out your chair. You will feel better to keep in the air as much as possible, even during a December passage. It is not as cold as one would think, and if you are well wrapped up, you can keep fairly comfortable.—Good-by.”

“Thank you. I am sure to be all right. It was very kind of you to see me off. Good-by.”

As she watched the resolute, familiar figure go down the gang-plank, she was conscious of a sudden tightening of the

heart-strings. He belonged to her brief past, the life which she had rejected. The life of her own choosing lay before her, to do with it what she would.

As the steamer backed clumsily away from the pier, swung out into clear water amid faint cheers from the dock, and moved down the bay, she still leaned upon the rail, absorbed in her own thoughts.

She was lonely and wretched, yet not afraid. Existence seemed to lie just before her, vast, inchoate, and strange. Its desolateness appalled her and its apparent contradictions confused, but she clung to her young self-confidence. She had done well to love, and well to leave love behind. To these beliefs she held with passion. And for the rest, there was still work, and next to love, work was the great enricher.

If Arria had not been her mother's

daughter; if her reversion to the stoical training of her childhood had been less sincere, or her revulsion against her temporary theory of self-indulgence less strenuous; if love had come a little later into her life, when the fierce idealism with which it is the chief function of the woman's college to endue its daughters, had been tamed by contact with reality, —if any of these things had been otherwise, her story would have been a different one. An older woman might well have thought her title to happiness valid, since the welfare of two legitimately outweighs that of one; a woman less accustomed to the reflection that denial is as rich an experience as indulgence, might well have shrunk from the pain involved in renunciation. But inexperience is the most valuable ally of idealism, and the girl's resolution to put aside the cup

whose sweetness she had not begun to know was fortified by her ignorance. So she turned her young face confidently toward the Old World and her new life, and struggled to lift up her heart, while the steamer plunged upon its way.

POSTLUDE

THE midsummer sun had gone down behind the hills, leaving in the sky a rosy glory that the river caught and made its own. Roderick Kirke, pacing the terrace in front of his home and smoking his after-dinner cigar, was comfortably aware of the charm of the night and of the wide and beautiful outlook before his eyes. He was aware, too, subconsciously, of the fertile reach of his ancestral acres as they swept back toward the hills, and of the placid, generous dignity of the home of his fathers where he dwelt. He was more acutely conscious of the group in front of the house. That, too, was his own — his mother, his wife, his child. The hour

and the scene were calculated to foster peace of soul and the pride of possession in any man.

"Take her away, nurse. She is getting sleepy." Mrs. Roderick Kirke picked up a minute but important bundle of flannel and lace from her mother-in-law's lap and handed it carefully to the functionary waiting to receive it. Then she joined her husband on the terrace, slipped a hand in his arm, and began conversation at once on the subject nearest her heart just then.

"Roderick, it is absolutely necessary that that child should be christened, but it is impossible unless we decide upon a name. The fact that your mother and mine each insist that she shall be called for the other, makes it difficult to give her either name. This afternoon I had an inspiration."

“Well?”

“Let us call her Arria.”

“Ah, — yes. After your cousin, of course. It is an unusual name,” said Mr. Kirke thoughtfully.

“I did not know whether you would like it or not. You never seemed so much interested in Arria after she broke her engagement with Mr. Sefton.”

“You cannot have better bread than is made with wheat. Sefton was certainly devoted to her and an excellent fellow.”

“Oh, yes, she could have made him tremendously happy. But I suppose she wanted to be happy herself. Perhaps she is, out there in Germany, digging away at the decaying roots of dead and buried words. I had a letter from her to-day. She is collecting all the participial constructions from — I forget where —

to prove — I forget what. She says it is very thrilling, and she enjoys it extremely. But I wish she would give it up, and come back to us! I never considered Arria strong-minded or independent. You can't ask a woman to marry the wrong man in order to demonstrate her attachment to the institution of matrimony."

"Didn't Sefton say he was going abroad this summer?"

"Yes. I suppose he will see her. Arria is essentially just. I have always hoped she would see her way some day to atoning to that man for his shrivelled life. The frost seemed to touch it when she threw him over."

"Let us hope she will. It would be a good thing all around."

"I want her to be happy," said Florence, with sudden energy. "There is

something very attaching about Arria. I loved her. And while there are many kinds of contentment, there is only one kind of happiness — namely, this kind ! I want her to know it.”

Roderick was silent, and after an instant his wife went on, “ I am happy, so happy that I pity you sometimes for having a more phlegmatic temperament and taking life and joy more calmly. When I see the wretchedness in other people’s lives, it seems impossible that I should be exempt, and I probe myself to see if I am not miserable too. But I never find that I am.”

“ Heaven forbid ! What have you and misery to do with one another ? ” said Roderick quickly, looking down at her with quiet tenderness.

“ Nothing — so long as you are happy ! ”

He stopped, but lifted her hand to

his lips. To his own bewilderment it was true that he was happy. At least, life was not ecstasy, perhaps, as he had once dreamed it might be. Sometimes the world seemed stupid and nothing was worth while; but such moods were universal, and quite as likely to attack men who had never suffered reverse in matters of the heart, as those who had. On the whole, he had small complaint against destiny. In all ways the world was going well with him. The subtle irony of the smile with which he answered her at last was directed not against himself, but against existence.

“It is true,” he said slowly, “that the affections are the great source of human happiness. But have you never thought also that, in view of all the facts of life, the mutability of human affection is its happiest quality?”

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